

Gambling

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Governments typically prohibit adolescents from engaging in government supported gambling and often define adolescent gambling as illegal. Despite that regulation, adolescents still participate in a wide variety of gambling activities and do so at a high rate. Large-scale prevalence studies conducted in several industrialized countries reveal high prevalence rates of adolescent gambling. Reviews of population-based surveys reveal wide ranges in rates of both adolescent lifetime involvement in gambling (21–99%) and regular involvement (1–35%) (Jackson et al. 2008). Many reasons help account for the wide ranges in estimates. Variations likely reflect varying definitions of what constitutes gambling, methodologies, and sampling approaches adopted by studies, and differences in the regulatory environment of jurisdictions where studies were conducted. Despite these variations, researchers increasingly agree that gambling poses, and reflects, considerable risks among adolescents. Gambling's being pervasively deemed an illicit activity for youth makes it easy to accept that it poses significant negative risks, but it still remains important to understand what those risks are as well as the nature of gambling itself to ensure that adolescents are protected from gambling's negative effects.

The types of adolescents' gambling activities ranges greatly, from exchanging cards about sports idols and action heroes, betting on sports, buying raffle tickets, and playing drinking games, to buying lottery tickets. The wide range of gambling activities is significant for several reasons. It tends to lead to inflating prevalence rates since it lumps a wide variety of forms of gambling that can have very different meanings. Further, it is

often difficult to determine which activities are illicit. Lumping together different forms of gambling results in the risk of ignoring the forms that are the most seriously problematic. Similarly, they show how gambling can be normalized; it may be viewed as problematic, but societies permit the targeting children and youth with competitions and a wide variety of promotions and prizes. In addition, not carefully differentiating among a wide variety of gambling activities makes it difficult to understand the effects of gambling and the types that should be marked for social opprobrium. Lastly, it makes it difficult to understand gambling itself, not the least of which would include the need to understand the variety of motivations for gambling and the variety of attitudes that adolescents have toward gambling.

The diversity of definitions of what constitutes gambling helps account for the wide variety of motivations adolescents report about gambling. For example, the most common motivations for gambling among adolescents include excitement, enjoyment, winning money, relaxation, escapism, and managing depression (e.g., Wood et al. 2004). These motivations reflect both positive and negative attitudes toward gambling. While some adolescents approve of gambling, the majority generally view gambling as a bad idea (Jackson et al. 2008). It is not surprising that adolescents who are problem gamblers display more positive attitudes toward gambling than other youth. Problem-gambling adolescents are more likely to gamble to win money and view gambling as a potentially profitable activity (Wood et al. 2004). Attitudes toward gambling also vary according to gender. Compared to girls, boys are more likely to gamble because they want to win money, and they are likely to view gambling as less likely to lead to negative outcomes like addiction, debt, and overspending (Jackson et al. 2008). Attitudes toward gambling and motivations supporting them, then, likely vary due to a variety of factors like the frequency of gambling, involvement in gambling, the severity of gambling, and

who is involved in the gambling (Chalmers and Willoughby 2006; Wood and Griffiths 2004).

Research on motivations for gambling has not been well-complemented by research examining why adolescents actually do engage in gambling. Some propose that gambling behavior simply is part of adolescents' experimentation with adult behaviors conducted with peers with similar motivations and interests (Delfabbro et al. 2006; Stinchfield 2000). Others suggest that gambling is part of other high-risk behaviors that contribute to the development of a disorder, such as conduct disorder, that may then influence behaviors such as substance use and gambling (Winters and Anderson 2000). These propositions do appear reasonable, but research has yet to examine them more closely.

Given the problems that arise with focusing on a wide variety of potential gambling activities, research has now started to focus more on problem gambling. Despite this more narrowed focus, considerable variability still exists within the group and the prevalence rates remain notable. Prevalence rates for adolescents' pathological gambling typically range from 4–8% (see Jackson et al. 2008). Importantly, these rates are actually twice to four times the rates found in adult populations (e.g., Derevensky et al. 2003). These studies are leading to an emerging consensus that adolescents actually are at higher risk of problem gambling than are adults (Derevensky and Gupta 2006). These studies also beg the question as to what leads some adolescents to desist from problem gambling and the risk factors that sustain gambling in the first instance. For example, there are no comprehensive studies of adolescent gambling that examine the extent to which early gambling, including problem gambling, leads to later gambling problems in adulthood. This is not to diminish the importance of current studies; it is to note that current studies suffer from considerable limitations in that they focus on associations rather than causal links and do not adopt longitudinal analyses.

Despite important limitations, several studies now document well the factors associated with adolescents' problematic gambling. Males consistently are reported as much more likely to be problem gamblers. One very large study, e.g., surveyed youth between the ages of 11 and 19 years of age. The researchers found that boys were five times more likely to be classified as probable pathological gamblers; they also reported that the boys were three times more likely to be classified as at risk for

becoming gamblers (Hardoon et al. 2004). These estimates may be on the high side of findings relating to sex differences, but several other studies support the finding that, compared to girls, boys are at least twice as likely to become problem gamblers (e.g., Chalmers and Willoughby 2006; Stinchfield 2000). Importantly, some studies report even higher differences, with one study of over 1,351 boys and girls (aged 16–19 years) revealing that the male to female ratio was 12:1 for problem and pathological gambling combined (Molde et al. 2008). Despite the higher prevalence of problem gambling among boys, it is important not to play down the risks attendant on girls. Although girls are less likely to be problem gamblers, problem-gambling girls report higher rates of negative mental health issues, including depression and suicide ideation and attempts (e.g., Delfabbro et al. 2006). These sex differences appear quire robust and research has only started to untangle their significance and meaning.

Among other important findings in this area is the consistent finding that adolescents with problem gambling behavior exhibit a host of other problem behaviors. The belief tends to be that problem gambling constitutes a part of a constellation of antisocial, risk-taking, and delinquent behaviors (Stinchfield 2000). These problem behaviors include alcohol or substance use, property offenses (vandalism and shoplifting), truancy, physical violence, and conduct problems (e.g., Delfabbro et al. 2006; Hardoon et al. 2004). Thus, substantial evidence indicates that adolescents who display gambling-related problems are at increased risk for other risk behaviors. Importantly, these results actually reflect the links between risk behavior and gambling found in several studies indicating that the links relate to gambling participation per se, rather than only to problem-gambling behavior (e.g., Jackson et al. 2008).

Findings linking gambling to other risk behaviors make it difficult to untangle the effects of gambling behaviors, but it is clear that gambling links to negative mental health outcomes. Adolescent gamblers are more likely than adolescent non-gamblers to report depression and other psychiatric health problems, such as substance-use disorders (Lynch et al. 2004). As expected, important sex differences have been found. For example, an important study conducted in the USA that used nationally representative study of adolescents aged 16–17 years of age found links between gender

and on the association between gambling and psychiatric symptomatology. Although gambling associated with elevated rates of alcohol use and abuse for both boys and girls, gambling associated with elevated rates of dysphoria/depression for girls only (Desai et al. 2005). Research linking mental health issues to gambling help support other areas of research relating to sex differences.

Given the links with problem behaviors and negative mental health outcomes, several researchers have developed models that relate quite closely to models dealing with problem behavior more generally. Thus Dickson et al. (2002), like several others who do research in this area have drawn on Jessor's (1998) model of adolescent risk behaviors and proposed a framework that incorporates adolescent gambling risk factors with other identified risk and protective factors. Those factors range from biological to social ones, but also include important psychological factors like depression and anxiety, high extroversion, low conformity and self-discipline, and poor coping skills. They also posited that problem gambling during adolescence also shares factors typically found to increase health-compromising behaviors (e.g., being male, low self-esteem, high risk-taking tendencies, school difficulties, and so forth). Efforts like those reveal how researchers now have moved to understand the various links, but given the complexities of what constitutes gambling, these efforts face important methodological and practical (e.g., sample size) challenges.

Efforts that seek to identify various links are important in that some studies reveal that the links between gambling and negative mental health, for example, are not as strong as might be expected, especially when other factors are considered. For example, a large study from Australia found that considering multiple factors resulted in having neither depressive symptomatology nor deliberate self-harm relate significantly to gambling (Jackson et al. 2008). Indeed, the study found that none of its measured mental health variables (victimization, depressive symptomatology, deliberate self-harm, arguments with others, unhappy with girlfriends/boyfriends) were significant independent risk factors of gambling (Id.). At some level, these findings are not surprising. Adolescents have many motivations for gambling, and they also live in very different social contexts that most likely approach gambling differently.

Although models that examine the variety of factors influencing adolescents' gambling provide very complex links that are challenging to test, these models still represent important steps toward better understanding gambling. The extent to which they can be better developed to reveal important links, the closer researchers will get toward designing and implementing effective intervention strategies. Given the prevalence rates of gambling, despite its being illicit and its associated negative outcomes of gambling, it is difficult to play down the significance of these efforts. Thus, relationships between gambling participation and other risk behaviors suggest that gambling may be viewed as another risky behavior, and that gambling may well reflect patterns of determinants similar for substance use, and antisocial behavior, as would be predicted by some adolescent risk-behavior models (Jessor 1998). Implications of such findings include expanding screening, prevention, and treatment efforts for a variety of adolescent risk behaviors to include gambling behavior and to develop programs that influence adolescents' risk behaviors more generally.

Adolescents are increasingly growing up in societies that present gambling as legal, accessible, and widely supported, but nevertheless restricted for adolescents. Despite restrictions, adolescents engage in a wide variety of gambling activities, and they do so for a variety of reasons. These developments have led to considerable research relating to adolescents' gambling. Despite the increasing focus on problem gambling during adolescence, it is important to emphasize that still not much is known about the less problematic forms of gambling and that such gambling also is of significance. Such research would be important to gaining a better understanding of more precisely how gambling is harmful to minors and of why societies exclude minors from gambling. It also would be important given that regular gambling has been associated with negative adult mental health; knowing the roots of those associations would be important to addressing those negative outcomes.

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attention is given to the identification of gangs (in the context of a wide spectrum of youth group formations) and the nature of gang membership (given that young people engage and affiliate with groups in variable ways). The essay also discusses the nature of gang-related behaviour, outlines 9 propositions regarding the character and key features of gangs, and discusses the social construction of gangs as a problem.

Introduction

The concept of “gang” is highly contentious and controversial. On the one hand, there are researchers who argue that gangs, as such, exist, that they are a problem, and that they must be studied in detail if prevention strategies are to be successfully employed. From this perspective, an effective and appropriate response to gang issues requires a thorough assessment of local communities and neighborhoods, and careful appraisal of the nature of the problem (Howell 2000).

Institutionally, the importance attached to gang research within academic circles is reflected, for example, in the formation of the Eurogang Research Network, a network with participation from over 20 different countries, including leading gang researchers from the United States. In a similar vein, the number of publications dedicated to this topic in recent years attests to the continuing and heightened interest in youth gangs in places such as the USA (Huff 2002), the UK (Pitts 2008), Australia (White 2006), Europe (Decker and Weerman 2005), and on the world stage generally (Duffy and Gillig 2004; Hagedorn 2007).

However, not everyone is convinced that the term “gang” is appropriate or that gang research is necessarily a good thing or socially progressive. For instance, commentators in the USA and the UK have criticized both the concept and those who extensively base their research on the idea of gang (see Hagedorn 2007; Hallsworth and Young 2008; Alexander 2008).

A key criticism is that contemporary gang analysis (or as some put it “gang talk”) blurs the distinction between youth, street gangs, and organized crime. In so doing, such research also entrenches a racialized understanding of gang: the term has increasingly become equated with black, minority ethnic, and immigrant young men. Gang research is thus seen to apply to particular ethnic minority groups in any specific society, and as part of this to simultaneously exclude

Gangs

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Overview

This essay provides a critical examination of the definitions and dynamics of youth gangs. Particular

majority youth from the label. Moreover, it is the pathology of the labeled group that is frequently seen as the problem (and thus the focus for police and other interventions), rather than systemic marginalization and changes in political economy. It is the latter that positions different population groups unequally in society, and that feeds both a process of criminalization of the disadvantaged and the moral panics that accompany this.

Regardless of divisions within academic circles, the issue of youth gangs has received considerable media, political, and police attention in many different countries in recent years. Periodic media reports about the perceived proliferation and criminal or antisocial activities of youth gangs have long featured in press stories about young people. Nevertheless, popular knowledge of youth groups, including “gangs,” has been based upon anecdotal information and mass media imagery.

Much of the disputation regarding the existence and magnitude of the alleged “gang” problem hinges on key definitional parameters, principally the appropriate conceptualization of youth collectivities – that is, youth in groups. Settling on culturally suitable distinctions to be drawn between the various youth-group formations is one of the fundamental precursors to the accurate quantification of “gangs” and “gang-related” incidents. Although a source of ongoing consternation, this definitional ambiguity is not unique to any one country.

Identification of Gangs

American research has concluded that a few general facts about gangs can be applied across assorted geographic, demographic, and ethnic settings (United States Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997, pp. 5–6):

- *Gangs are diverse* – they vary, for example, in ethnic composition, criminal activities, age of members, propensity toward violence, and organizational stability.
- *Gangs change* – they evolve due to direct factors (such as prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts) and in response to indirect factors (such as demographic shifts, economic conditions, influence of the media).
- *Reactions to gangs vary* – some communities deny they exist while others sensationalize them if one is identified, some communities establish task forces

to address gang issues while others conduct assessments to determine the nature and scope of gang problems.

- *Effective responses are diverse* – communities have developed various responses to gangs, including prevention, intervention and suppression, or enforcement.

The message here is that gang research (and the development of anti-gang strategies) must begin with the premise that there is no one single model of “gang” as such. The great variability in youth-group formations precludes reliance upon either stereotypes of youth gangs or narrow definitions of what constitutes a gang. The sensitivities required of gang scholars is captured in what is known as the “Eurogang Paradox”: the denial that there are “American style” street gangs in Europe, based on a “typical” American gang, a model that is not at all typical of gangs in America (Klein 2002). In other words, reliance upon stereotypes to define gang life not only allows the denial of youth gangs, but it misrepresents the actual diversity of gangs in the United States.

For instance, American researchers have developed a range of gang typologies to describe diverse youth-group formations from the criminally instrumental to the purely recreational (see for example, Miller 1992; Huff 2002; Sanders 1994; Klein et al. 1995). Moreover, US, Canadian, European, Australian, and South African research has increasingly emphasized that gang formation is a social process involving complex forms of membership, transformation, and disintegration, a point returned to shortly (Klein 1995; Gordon and Foley 1998; Gordon 2000; Bjorgo 1999; White 2006; Standing 2005). Indeed, American research challenges popular media images based on traditional stereotypes, and demonstrates, for example, that in many cases gangs typically are not highly organized, and that the gangs, drugs, and violence connection applies more to adult gangs than to youth gangs (Howell 2000).

Klein (2002) distinguishes between five different street gang structures by comparing groups on the basis of:

- Whether or not they have *subgroups* or internal cliques
- Their *size* in terms of numbers of members
- The *age range* of membership

- The *duration* of the gang over time
- Whether or not it is *territorial*
- Its *crime versatility* versus whether it specializes in particular kinds of crime

The importance of this typology is that it indicates further the diversity of street gang formations, and thus reinforces the fact that gang stereotypes do not match gang realities.

A feature of contemporary American gang research is the general observation that the composition of youth gangs is changing and that there are large differences in how groups are structured and organized (Howell 1998). Again, the emphasis is on analysis and close examination of specific youth-group formations rather than making assumptions and presumptions about the character of youth gangs. This point is reinforced in South African research that argues that the obsession with gangs “has not been backed up with a detailed description of what gangs are and what they mean to different people. The little research that has been done on gangs reveals only that the term has developed a special ambiguity and that in the South African context, the notion of gangs is plagued with stereotypes, false assumptions, and half-truths” (Standing 2005). Canadian discussions of gangs make much the same point:

- It is difficult to speculate as to the extent to which gangs are present in Canada. Gangs are a confusing issue for Canadians. Information given by media, law enforcement, and government sources often contradicts information given by theoreticians and statisticians. These contradictions arise from different groups and organizations attempting to control the gang situation, whether it be informally or formally. Therefore, general impressions of gangs are abstract and enigmatic, resulting in a concerned and fearful public (John Howard Society of Alberta 2001, p. 16).

Interestingly, it is the diversity and ambiguity surrounding gang formation that in its own way may create disquiet among general members of the public.

US-style gangs, as customarily defined in terms of being highly structured, organized, and criminally motivated, are less prevalent in other countries, and particularly do not feature among teenager group formations as such. The typical way of describing US youth gangs is to provide a composite picture of distinguishing characteristics. These generally include:

- A self-formed, complex association of youths (aged 12–24 and predominantly male) united through mutual interest, the members of which (customarily numbering in excess of 25) maintain regular, ongoing contact.
- Formalized structure and organization maintained through strong intergroup solidarity and loyalty.
- Identifiable leadership and rules.
- Distinctive geographic, territorial, ethnic and/or other forms of domain identification; may involve self-designated names and may be associated with specific symbols such as distinctive articles of clothing, tattoos, hand-signals, vocabulary, or graffiti tags.
- Specific and purposive role rationale and group norms, including structured, continuous engagement in criminal conduct.

(Source: Perrone and White 2000).

Whether and to what extent such gangs actually exist in the USA is of course subject to debate. Big questions have also been asked as to whether similar types of gang formation have been transplanted to other national contexts, in particular Great Britain (see Alexander 2008; Pitts 2008).

Miller’s definition of youth gangs is considered one of the better: “a self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility, or enterprise” (Miller 1992, p. 21). This definition is meant to exclude motorcycle gangs, prison gangs, racial supremacists, and other hate groups, and to exclude gangs whose membership is restricted to adults.

Another somewhat more flexible variation on this is provided by the Eurogang Network, which uses the following definition: “A street gang (or problematic youth group) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity” (van Gemert et al. 2008). As various related research has also demonstrated, quite often the core illegal activity of most concern is street violence (White and Mason 2006).

While there is no standardized definition of a gang, nevertheless there is some agreement on the basic elements as outlined above. Further to this, Maxson and

Klein (1989) identify three criteria for defining a street gang that have implications for the development of suitable anti-gang strategies:

- Community recognition of the group
- The group's recognition of itself as a distinct group of adolescents or young adults
- The group's involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement and neighborhood residents

These criteria have been echoed in South African legislation that provides a list of factors that are relevant for the identification of a gang member during prosecution and sentencing (Standing 2005). These include:

- Admits to criminal gang membership
- Is identified as a member of a criminal gang by a parent or guardian
- Resides in or frequents a particular criminal gang's area and adopts their style of dress, their use of hand signs, language or their tattoos, and associates with known members of a criminal gang
- Has been arrested more than once in the company of identified members of a criminal gang for offences that are consistent with usual criminal gang activity
- Is identified as a member of a criminal gang by physical evidence such as photographs or other documentation

In practice, the specific features of any particular youth-group formation will vary greatly (see for example, Howell 2000; White et al. 1999; Standing 2005; White 2006). But if the group sees itself as a “gang,” and is perceived by others around them as a “gang,” primarily because of its illegal activities, then this constitutes the minimum baseline definition of a gang. But are all groups of young people gangs?

Street Groups and Youth Gangs

Research into youth gangs has to locate these specific kinds of groups within the context of other types of youth-group formations. That is, it is important that distinctions be made between different sorts of groups – that may include gangs, youth subcultures, friendship networks, school cohorts, sports teams, and so on. Similarly, the reasons for group formation and the typical focus of activities can provide insight into differences between groups – as with distinguishing between social-centered and criminal-centered activity.

Gang research in Canada provides a useful series of benchmarks in distinguishing different types of street-present groups. A typology developed by Gordon can be used initially to distinguish diverse kinds of groups and gangs (see Gordon 1995, 2000; Gordon and Foley 1998). The typology consists of six categories:

- *Youth movements*, which are social movements characterized by a distinctive mode of dress or other bodily adornments, a leisure time preference, and other distinguishing features (e.g., punk rockers)
- *Youth groups*, which comprise small clusters of young people who hang out together in public places such as shopping centers (e.g., sometimes referred to as “mallies”)
- *Criminal groups*, which are small clusters of friends who band together, usually for a short period of time, to commit crime primarily for financial gain (may contain young and not so young adults as well)
- *Wannabe groups*, which include young people who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths (e.g., territorial and use identifying markers of some kind)
- *Street gangs*, which are groups of young people and young adults who band together to form a semi-structured organization, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behavior or organized violence against rival street gangs (e.g., less visible but more permanent than other groups)
- *Criminal business organization*, which are groups that exhibit a formal structure and a high degree of sophistication, mainly comprising adults, and which engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons and almost invariably maintain a low profile (e.g., may have a name but rarely visible)

This typology can be refined further by taking into account recent research that describes forms of group association among young people from diverse socio-ethnic backgrounds.

For example, the issue of youth gangs has come to the fore in many jurisdictions worldwide, and the

question of how best to respond to gang activities has generated considerable attention from academics, policy makers, and law enforcement services in recent years (see for example, Klein et al. 2001; Short and Hughes 2006). With this upsurge of interest, however, the often central place of race and ethnicity in gang members' identities, a phenomenon apparent in many different national contexts, has been acknowledged as well (see, for example, Hagedorn 2007; van Gemert et al. 2008). Issues of group membership, formation, and activity have to be analyzed from the point of view of where members are coming from, as well as how "outsiders" view the group.

Identification of Gang Members

There are major difficulties in defining what a gang is. So too, there are major problems in trying to identify who a gang member is, and what might be their precise relationship to a particular youth-group formation. The question here is not so much the presence of the group, but a particular individual's involvement with that group. Group membership is largely a fluid process, with specific individuals having varying degrees of association over time.

Consider the following: A young person may occasionally associate with a "gang," but not be a member. A young person may participate in the activities of the "gang" once in a while, but not be a member. A young person may desire to be a part of the "gang," but not actually become a member. A young person may say he/she is a part of the same crowd or "gang," but not actually be a member of the relevant core group. A young person may have all the external trappings of a gang member (street gang culture in the form of dress, posture, talking style), but not be a member of a gang.

Gang membership is not absolute or fixed, but highly variable and changing. Indeed, there is often no clear dividing line between those who are in a gang and those who are not. Recent Sydney-based research found that group membership and friendship networks are perhaps best conceptualized as being highly variable – there are layers of belonging and connection that vary according to circumstances and activities (White 2008a, b). Different ethnic groups would collaborate or have alliances with other groups. They might share together in drug taking, making music, or even fighting. In some instances, the

neighborhood connection was stronger than ethnic identity as such, as when "outsiders" entered into the local area to have it out with a particular ethnic minority group, and various ethnic groups would combine against the intruders. In other cases, the local "gangs" were part of larger ethnic networks and subgroups, incorporating large geographical areas and relationships across distances (including international boundaries). Being a member of a "gang" was generally a contingent process, one defined by specific activities, special relationships, and specific networks at any particular time.

Gang membership also tends to be marked by different degrees of commitment and association. Any particular group tends to be loosely organized around a core group (the hard core or leaders), fringe members (who participate in gang-related activities on a less frequent basis), and "wannabes" (those who aspire to be hard core members of the main group). Again, these categorizations are fluid and may not always apply to actual group formations. In general, there is no set pattern of recruitment and membership; in the Sydney research there was only one mention (out of 50 interviews) of a gang initiation ceremony. Otherwise, who belonged to what group and in what capacity tended to be highly variable depending upon the individual, and on the circumstances that might bring together groups of young people. People could drift in and out of particular youth formations, including those self-described by the young people as "gangs". For some, it was a short-lived passing phase, for others it might constitute a longer-term commitment. Other relationships and networks, particularly those revolving around ethnic networks, were more permanent, but not gang-centered as such.

Depending upon who is defining gang membership, according to what criteria, there may be dispute over whether or not a particular individual is in fact a gang member. Variables that might be considered include: symbols or symbolic behavior that tie the person to a particular gang; self-admission of gang membership; association with known gang members; type of criminal behavior; location or residence; police identification as a gang member; other informant identification as a gang member; other institutional identification as a gang member (see Howell 2000). In the end, the issue of individual gang membership can be as contentious as defining particular youth-group

formations as being gangs. In either case, there are major areas of ambiguity and uncertainty. In both cases, as well, things have a tendency to change over time.

Gang membership is also shaped by how others outside of immediate social networks perceive youth-group formations. Whether it be the media, politicians, law enforcement officials, or academics, the portrayal of certain groups of young people as “gangs” may well produce the very thing that is being described. In other words, most gangs are not that organized, but treating them as if they are has potentially serious social ramifications: “Treating them like cohesive groups may create a self-fulfilling prophecy. . . It can provide the group with a common point of conflict as well as a label and identity, setting a self-fulfilling prophecy in motion” (McGloin 2005, p. 610). If a particular group is called a “gang” enough times, then the group may well transform into the very thing that it has been named.

It is not only perception by others, but self-perception, that is crucial to the development of gang identity. Sydney research has found, for example, that some of the young men who were interviewed presented themselves as a “gang” in order to gain a measure of “respect” (Collins et al. 2000). The symbolic representation of themselves as members of a gang, however, was more at the level of overt performance (i.e., presenting an image of being tough and dangerous), than in relation to particular kinds of professional criminal activity. The point of claiming gang status was to affirm social presence, to ensure mutual protection, and to compensate for a generally marginalized economic and social position. A slightly different example of this naming process is provided by the “Glenorchy Mafia” in Tasmania. Here, what was once a sports team for “disadvantaged kids” that was jokingly referred to, by the young people themselves, as the Glenorchy Mafia, evolved over time into that which was being mocked, namely, a publicly identified “youth gang”.

Significantly, research indicates that where young people themselves claim gang membership, they tend to engage in substantially more antisocial and criminal behavior than those who do not profess to be gang members (Esbensen et al. 2001, p. 123; see also White and Mason 2006). Who you say you are thus has implications for what you do and with whom. Group identification is thus intertwined with group activity.

Gang-Related behavior

It can be argued that gang-like behavior is a problem requiring further study. For example, a study of ethnic minority youth in Melbourne, Australia found that group conflict, and especially street fights, were common across the sample group (White et al. 1999). Whatever the ambiguities of the term “gang” among academics and young people themselves, membership of certain groups or collectivities was nevertheless associated with varying degrees of violence and illegal activity. To “outsiders,” such street activity could well be interpreted as hallmarks of “gang” membership and engagement. For “insiders,” however, group membership was often linked to a form of protection against racism and street violence, rather than a violent outlet. For many, there are major positive benefits to be derived from group participation with young people from similar class, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

Gang-related behavior can initially be categorized in terms of types of activities (in another context, some of these activities have been associated with different types of gangs; see United States Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998, p. 11–14). There are four types of activities (White 2002).

Criminal – in which the main focus of the activity is directed at making money through illegal means (such as property theft, drug selling). This kind of activity may be sporadic and episodic, and may not be central to a group’s overall activity. Or it may involve complex relationships, techniques, and skills, in essence a whole culture and highly organized division of labor within which profit making occurs.

Conflict – in which the main feature is that of street fighting and where violence is associated with gaining social status and street reputation. This kind of activity is marked by an emphasis on honor, personal integrity, and territoriality (defending one’s physical or community boundaries). Issues of self-esteem and identity, constructions of masculinity, and self-protection loom large in consideration of why conflicts occur and persist over time.

Retreat – in which the main activity is that of heavy drug use and generally a withdrawal from mainstream social interaction. Illegal activity mainly lies in the use of drugs as such, rather than in violence or other forms of antisocial activity. However, due to the drug

use, property crimes and crimes of violence may result, often on an impulsive and senseless basis. The presence of drug users may create moral panic or disturb the sensibilities of other members of the public who are witness to them.

Street Culture – in which the main characteristic is adoption of specific gang-related cultural forms and public presentation of gang-like attributes. The emphasis is on street gang culture, incorporating certain types of music, ways of dressing, hand signals, body ornaments including tattoos, distinctive ways of speaking, graffiti, and so on. It may be “real” activity in the sense of reflecting actual group dynamics and formations. It may also simply be a kind of mimicry, based upon media stereotypes and youth cultural fads.

An important feature of this description of different types of activities is that the activities actually pertain to young people in general, rather than to youth gangs specifically. That is, young people may engage in one or more of the activities described, at different times and in different locations, to a varying extent depending upon social background and other factors. They may do so on their own or with a group, and involvement in particular activities may be for short or long periods of times. In other words, what is described here as gang-related activity does not equate with gang membership. Nor does gang membership necessarily translate into participation in these activities. For example, it has been observed that “In some gangs, using drugs is an important means of gaining social status. In others, drug use is forbidden, especially if the gang is involved in selling them” (United States Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998, p. 21). In addition, it may be the case that individual members of a gang may engage in specific types of illegal activity, such as selling drugs or homicide, but this may not be a function or outcome of the gang as a whole.

The visibility and group nature of much youth crime lends itself to gang explanations for juvenile offending. That is, most youth crime involves more than one person, it is usually easier to detect, and the activities of young people tend to be more public than other groups (see Cunneen and White 2007). However, the group nature of juvenile offending should not be confused with gang-related criminality as such. The vast majority of youth crime tends to be episodic, opportunistic, and trivial in nature, and either arises out of the

spontaneous activities of social groups or is linked to a small number of chronic offenders who account for the bulk of juvenile crime. While youth offending cannot be equated with gang activity, nevertheless, membership of a gang can play a major part in criminal engagement. American research, for example, has shown that there are significant differences between the criminal behavior of youth gang members and non-gang, but similarly at risk, young people. It was found that gang membership increases the likelihood and frequency that members will commit serious and violent crimes (Huff 1998). This is similar to findings of recent gang to non-gang comparative research in Australia (White and Mason 2006). In other words, gang membership does not explain juvenile offending in general, but it can exacerbate juvenile offending in practice.

Key Propositions about Gangs

The lived realities of those young people who identify with gangs is complicated. It is not surprising then that researchers who try to interpret what is going on in their lives sometimes find it difficult to get things right. This is partly due to the fact that gang research and the development of appropriate anti-gang strategies are beset by persistent problems relating to definitional issues. They are also made more complex due to the ambiguities and paradoxes of youth-group behavior generally. The key issues surrounding analysis of gangs can be summarized in the form of a series of basic propositions (White 2008b). Significant sources for this review included Miller (1992), Decker (1996), Howell (1998), Gordon (2000), Klein et al. (2001), Esbensen et al. (2001), Klein (2002), and Standing (2005), among other writers working in the area.

Proposition 1

US, Canadian, British, European, Australian, and South African research has increasingly emphasized that gang formation is a *social process* involving complex forms of membership, transformation, and disintegration.

Proposition 2

The composition of youth gangs is ever changing and there are large differences in how groups are structured and organized, and in how different organizations, agencies, and researchers describe the situation, and this makes “gangs” as a descriptor even more *ambiguous* and difficult to pin down.

Proposition 3

Gangs are primarily a matter of *identity*, and identity itself is shaped by intermingling factors such as community recognition of the group as a gang, the group's recognition of itself as a distinct group, and the group's involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement officials and local people.

Proposition 4

Just as there are problems in defining what a gang is, so too there are major difficulties in trying to establish who a gang member is, since *group membership is a fluid process* and specific individuals have varying degrees and types of association with it over time.

Proposition 5

Even where a gang can be determined to actually exist, gang membership is not absolute or fixed, since *gang membership is highly variable and changing*, and there is often no clear dividing line between those who are in a gang and those who are not – there are layers of belonging and connection that vary according to circumstance and activities.

Proposition 6

Many young people who do not identify with gangs may nevertheless engage in gang-like behavior, such as criminal activity, street fights, drug use, and wearing of gang type clothing. *Gang-related behavior is not the same as gang membership*. Nor do all gangs engage in the full range of gang-like behavior.

Proposition 7

Not all gang behavior is necessarily criminal, illegal, or “bad” since a lot of what young people do is simply to hang out together. *Much of the time the gang is not a problem* for nearby residents, for other young people, or for themselves.

Proposition 8

Where young people themselves claim gang membership, they tend to engage in substantially more antisocial and criminal behavior than those who do not profess to be gang members. Thus *who you say you are has implications for what you do and with whom*. Group identification is intertwined with group activity.

Proposition 9

Gang membership is heavily tied in with group violence. However, this violence is manifest within a wider

context of social marginalization and exclusion based upon ethnicity. Antagonisms on the street – between groups of young ethnic minority youth and authority figures such as the police, and between diverse groups of young people – are constantly reinforced by negative stereotyping, media moral panics, and the day-to-day racism experienced by the young people.

To respond appropriately to the gang phenomenon, it is imperative at some stage to engage with these propositions. What one ought not to do, however, is to ignore the difficulties posed by these propositions in favor of intervention strategies based upon more simplistic analytical models. It is instrumental to consider, for example, proposition No.7 in greater depth.

Gang Problems

A distinction can be drawn between gangs and gang-related behavior. A further analytical point also needs to be made, that is, not all gang behavior is necessarily criminal, illegal, or “bad.” Therefore one must distinguish between different kinds of gang behavior. More importantly, the question can be asked: when do these gang behaviors become a problem? The following elements have been identified as central to what constitutes a problem (United States Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997: 12):

- *A problem involves a group of harmful incidents* (and thus a long-term solution to prevent its re-occurrence).
- *The incidents that make up the problem must be similar in some way* (on the basis of time or place, the people or behavior involved, and the social or physical environment within which it takes place).
- *A problem must be of direct concern to the public* (usually involving injury, or stolen or damaged property, or serious social and economic costs).

In the 1999 Melbourne gang research, there was much confusion and ambiguity over the difference between “gangs” and “groups” (White et al. 1999). In each case, membership tended to revolve around similar interests (such as choice of music, sport, style of dress), similar appearance or ethnic identity (such as language, religion, and culture), and the need for social belonging (such as friendship, support, and protection). Group affiliation was sometimes perceived as the greatest reason why certain young people were singled out as being a “gang,” and why

particular conflicts occurred between different groups of young people.

In the end, if gangs as a problem are to be addressed, then a series of questions about gangs and gang-related behavior generally need to be asked (United States Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998, pp. 128–129):

- Do gangs exist in our community?
- How do we know they exist?
- How long have these gangs been in operation?
- Approximately how many youth are involved in these gangs?
- How are youth recruited into these gangs?
- What behaviors do these gangs engage in?
- What specific harm do these behaviors cause?
- Is someone being injured?
- Is something being stolen? If so, what?
- Is property being damaged?
- Could serious social or economic costs result from these behaviors?
- Who carries out these behaviors?
- What efforts, if any, have already been made to control gang membership or harmful activities?
- Are specific individuals, businesses, or community groups complaining about gang activities? If so, what specific behaviors or activities are they reporting?
- Are there behaviors being carried out at certain times and places?

It is important to bear in mind the positive features of gangs for many young people (and, in some cases, for their parents and other family members). Gangs can provide support and security for vulnerable groups of young people. They can provide opportunities for status, group identity, and excitement. They provide a mechanism for young people to cope with oppressive environments, and represent one response or option to chronic marginalization and social exclusion. All of these features point to the importance of peers and peer networks in the lives of young people – but leave open the matter of the social content of youth-group formation. The problem is not with youth groups as such, it is with what groups of youths do.

Interpreting how gangs change over time depends on two things: the concepts deployed to explain gang formation in the first place, and the empirical history of the group in question. Gangs may enjoy a short life span, or they may persist over time as quasi-institutionalized groups. If the latter, then it would appear that entrenched

long-standing cultural and socio-economic factors are determinate. If the former, then gang formation is more probably due to temporary peer group dynamics, fluctuations in local regulatory situations or employment markets – in other words, trends and fashions that ebb and flow according to immediate circumstances.

Groups that persist over different generations of young people would appear to involve a transfer of some type of commonality within communities. To put it differently, the persistence of a “gang” or specific group identity can be explained in terms of, for example, sharing the same ethnic background and social experiences as earlier generations (e.g., Lebanese Australian youth). Or, it may be the case that gangs of young people are linked to “underclass” conditions, wherever and whenever these become evident, and that their persistence is best understood in the context of the wider political economy (see Moore 1988–1989; Davis 1990; Hagedorn 2007). Or it could be a combination of social and economic factors that pertain to specific groups or geographical areas. The persistence of gang formations has implications for intervention strategies insofar as gangs often occupy an ambiguous position within local communities – and may, therefore, not be perceived as quite the threat outsiders may deem them to be.

Although certain gangs may be seen as more or less a permanent fixture of some neighborhoods, suggesting a basic continuity in gang life, the actual composition and activities of each gang formation needs to be examined closely and empirically. That is, the character of particular gang formations will be different depending upon who the current members are. As Moore (1988–1989) observes, new cliques or “gangs” may start up every few years, each with their own name and separate identity. They may identify with previous gangs or cliques that have gone on before them, yet they are autonomous from previous generations. Having “gangs” in a neighborhood over time does not therefore equate to the same gang persisting over time. Each group of young people constructs the kind of group formation dictated by its times and circumstances, while drawing upon past examples to guide them in this process.

Analysis of the life course of locally based gangs is vital to understanding membership patterns and preferred activities. For instance, one can ask whether or not gang membership is “inherited.” Do young teenagers join certain groups because of siblings and/or other relations being associated with these groups? What role do

family ties have in both the persistence of gangs, and gang membership, over time? What impact does this “cultural tradition” have on gang processes and the possibility of breaking the pattern? How does one become an “ex-gang” member? What social processes entrench gang status and gang membership over time (such as imprisonment and release of gang leaders back into the same community)? These are important practical questions, especially given that there is evidence that as gangs mature, the criminal involvement of their members grows more serious (Howell et al. 2002). The longer and more established the gang, the more likely it will engage in higher levels of violence and criminal activity.

Conclusion

If one focuses attention on a problem, then the problem will more often than not seem to be real. This is one of the dilemmas of gangs research. For those who see gangs as a bona fide area of public concern, the recognition of gangs is a basic starting point for intervention and crime prevention. For those who view gangs discourse itself as part of the problem then the agenda is very different indeed. In particular, the stigmatizing impact of gang labels (Alexander 2008) and the potential for unwarranted group profiling on the part of justice authorities (see White 2008b) are seen to be especially problematic. The doing of gang research is thus fraught with a number of ethical as well as methodological and conceptual issues. The concept of gang, and gang research as a social process, thus both continue to be the subject of major ongoing debates.

Cross-References

- [Delinquency](#)
- [Peer Influences](#)

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Gateway Drug Use

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Overview

Research on adolescent drug use over the past quarter century in the USA and other developed countries has

consistently found that there is a common sequence of drug initiation and progression. Alcohol and tobacco are typically used before cannabis, which in turn, is used before “pills” and drugs like heroin and cocaine. Some drugs in this sequence have been called “gateway drugs”; that is, drugs whose use in some way is a contributory cause of the use of later drugs in the sequence. Cannabis, for example, has often been said to be a gateway drug for cocaine and heroin (Kandel 2002).

The status of the “gateway hypothesis” has been controversial. It has not always been clear what the hypothesis means and what it entails. Competing explanations of the relationship between cannabis and other drug use have affected drug policy in very different ways in different countries. In the USA, for example, this pattern has been seen as warranting programs to prevent or delay the use of cannabis in order to reduce the use of other illicit drugs. Drug policy analysts in the Netherlands have argued, by contrast, that the pattern arises because under prohibition cannabis and other illicit drugs are sold in the same black market. They have decriminalized the retail sales of small quantities of cannabis in an effort to break the market nexus between cannabis and other illicit drugs.

This essay summarizes recent research that has been conducted on the gateway hypothesis. Before doing so it: briefly describes the relationships that have been consistently found between cannabis and other types of illicit drug use; outlines the major competing explanations that have been offered of the relationships; and briefly discusses the type of evidence that is needed to decide between these explanations.

Gateway Patterns of Drug Use

Cross-sectional surveys of adolescent drug use in the United States and elsewhere have consistently shown three types of relationship between the use of cannabis and other illicit drugs, such as heroin and cocaine (see Hall and Lynskey 2005; Kandel 2002).

First, American adolescents during the 1970s and 1980s showed a typical sequence of involvement with licit and illicit drugs in which almost all who tried cocaine and heroin had first used alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis. The exceptions to this generalization have been found in samples of youth who live in inner city areas where a wide range of illicit drugs are available to them at an early age.

Second, it was the *regular* cannabis users who were most likely to use heroin and cocaine. Kandel, for example, found in one of her early studies that only 7% of American youth who had never used cannabis reported using another illicit drug but 33% of cannabis users, and 84% of daily cannabis users had done so.

Third, the earlier the age at which any drug was first used, the more likely the user was to use the next drug in the sequence. So those who began to use alcohol and tobacco at an early age were the most likely to use cannabis, and early cannabis users, in turn, were more likely to use “pills,” and early users of “pills” were the ones most likely to use cocaine and heroin.

These patterns of drug involvement have not been confined to the USA. In New Zealand, for example, studies of drug use in two birth cohorts have found the same sequence of involvement with drugs and the same predictors of progression even though cocaine and heroin are much less readily available in New Zealand than in the USA or Australia.

Explanations of These “Gateway” Patterns of Drug Use

There are three broad explanations of the association between cannabis and other illicit drug use (Hall and Lynskey 2005). The first hypothesis is that there is no causal relationship between cannabis and other drug use; that the association is explained by common characteristics of those who are early cannabis users and subsequently use other illicit drugs. The second hypothesis is that the relationship arises because cannabis and other illicit drugs are supplied by the same black market, with the consequence that cannabis users have more opportunities to try other illicit drugs. The third hypothesis is that the pharmacological effects of cannabis increase an adolescent’s propensity to use other illicit drugs.

Is the Relationship due to Common Factors?

According to the common cause hypothesis, it is the personal characteristics of the individuals who use cannabis that also make them more likely to use other drugs. These characteristics might be individual propensities to engage in socially deviant conduct, such as drug use, criminal acts and precocious sexual activity that could be of environmental origin, could be due to a shared genetic vulnerability to develop different types of drug dependence, or some combination of the two.

Social Environmental Hypotheses: The Role of Exposure Opportunities

The pattern of illicit drug use among American adolescents in the 1970s was affected by drug availability. Among cohorts of heroin users in the 1950s and 1960s, prior involvement with cannabis was rare outside geographic areas of the USA in which it was readily available. Research on African-American adolescents found that in these communities cocaine and heroin often preceded the use of the less readily available hallucinogens and “pills.” Similarly, American soldiers in Vietnam were more likely to use heroin before they used alcohol because heroin was cheaper and more freely available in that setting than alcohol.

These historical and geographical variations in drug use sequences suggest a sociological explanation of the higher rates of progression to heroin use among heavy cannabis users, namely that regular cannabis users are more likely to use other illicit drugs because they have more opportunities to use other drugs than peers who do not use cannabis. Regular cannabis use, on this hypothesis, increases involvement in a drug-using subculture, which, in turn, exposes cannabis users to opportunities to use other illicit drugs. Their drug-using peers might also be expected to approve of other illicit drug use.

There have been surprisingly few comparisons of “exposure opportunities” between cannabis users and nonusers. Fergusson and Horwood’s (2000) analysis of data gathered for the Christchurch Health and Development Study (CHDS), a longitudinal study of a New Zealand cohort of 1,265 children followed since birth in mid-1977, provided a limited assessment of the contribution made by self-reported affiliations with drug-using peers to the relationship between cannabis and other illicit drug use. They investigated the effects of self-reported peer use of alcohol, cannabis, and other illicit drugs on the relationship between cannabis and other illicit drugs. The inclusion of peer drug use reduced but did not eliminate the relationship between cannabis and other illicit drug use.

Wagner and Anthony (2002) examined the effects of exposure opportunities to cannabis and other drugs on cannabis and other illicit drug use among young adults (aged 12–25 years) in the pooled 1991–1994 US National Household Surveys of Drug Abuse. They assessed exposure opportunities by the age at which a respondent first reported an opportunity to use

tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, or cocaine. Wagner and Anthony found that young people who had used alcohol or tobacco were three times more likely to report an opportunity to use cannabis (75% vs. 25%). They also had these opportunities at an earlier age than those who had not used alcohol or tobacco. Alcohol and tobacco users were also much more likely to use cannabis when the opportunity arose than young people who had not used alcohol or tobacco (85% vs. <25%). And they did so sooner than peers who had not (50% of alcohol and tobacco users had used cannabis within 1 year of first offer whereas fewer than 20% of non-alcohol and tobacco users had used within 5 years of first offer). These relationships did not change when young people who had used within a year of first opportunity to do so were excluded from the analysis (to reduce the possibility that the relationship was due to active cannabis seeking by some young people).

Wagner and Anthony also found that opportunities to use cocaine were strongly related to cannabis, alcohol, and tobacco use. Only 13% of young people who had not used alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis reported an opportunity to use cocaine. This compared with 26% of alcohol and tobacco users; 51% of cannabis-only users; and 75% of those who had used alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis.

Selective Recruitment

Another plausible and related common cause explanation of the association between regular cannabis use and the use of other drugs is that there is selective recruitment to cannabis use of socially deviant young people who have a predilection to use a variety of intoxicating drugs like alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, and heroin. The sequence of drug involvement, on this hypothesis, reflects the differing availability and societal disapproval of different types of drug use. Alcohol and tobacco use precede cannabis use because alcohol and tobacco are more readily available to adolescents and their use more socially approved than that of cannabis. Cannabis use precedes heroin use for the same reasons. On this hypothesis, cannabis use does not cause the use of other illicit drugs; rather, cannabis and heroin use are common consequences of preexisting propensities to use drugs.

The selective recruitment hypothesis is supported by the substantial correlations between nonconforming adolescent behaviors, such as high school dropout, early premarital sexual experience and pregnancy,

delinquency, and early alcohol and illicit drug use. It has also been supported by simulation methods by Morral et al. (2002). These authors assumed that individuals only differ in their propensity to use a variety of drugs (which could reflect personal characteristics, peer group drug use, and the availability of drugs in individuals' neighborhoods) and that the propensity to use drugs is correlated with the opportunity to use them and with the age of first use of any drug. Critically, their model assumed that there was *no* correlation between (1) the opportunities to use or age of first use of cannabis and (2) the opportunities to use or age of first use of other illicit drugs. Morral et al.'s model reproduced all three "gateway" patterns. Cannabis users were more likely to use harder drugs; cannabis use preceded the use of other illicit drugs, and there was a dose-response relationship between the frequency of cannabis use and the use of other illicit drugs.

The selective recruitment hypothesis has been empirically tested in longitudinal studies by assessing whether cannabis use predicts the use of heroin and cocaine after statistically controlling for differences between cannabis users and nonusers in personal characteristics (Fergusson and Horwood 2000). Fergusson et al. (2002) have reported one of the most comprehensive tests of the hypothesis in the CHDS study of New Zealand children followed from birth (until age 21 by the time of this study) and regularly assessed on a large set of potentially confounding psychosocial variables. These variables included: family background (socioeconomic status, parental conflict and divorce, childhood sexual abuse, parental punishment and parental attachment); parental adjustment (parental alcohol and drug problems, criminality and illicit drug use); individual characteristics of the young person (gender, intelligence, novelty seeking); early adolescent development (cigarette smoking, frequency of alcohol use, juvenile offending, school dropout, conduct problems, and attitudes toward drug use); peer affiliations (peer use and problems with alcohol and other drug use); and personal history of risk taking.

Fergusson and colleagues found a strong dose-response relationship between the frequency of cannabis use by age 16 (no use, use less than 10 times, and use more than 10 times) and development of a problem with cannabis, alcohol, or other substances by age 18. There was also a strong association between the social background of the adolescents and their likelihood of

having used cannabis by age 16. Early cannabis users came from lower socioeconomic status families with a history of parental conflict, parental criminality, alcohol and drug use, and low parental attachment. They also had a history of conduct problems, low self-esteem, and high novelty seeking, and were likely to affiliate with delinquent peers. Adjustment for these family and personal factors substantially reduced but did not eliminate the relationships between early cannabis use and the use of other illicit drugs.

These studies suggest two important things. First, selective recruitment does explain part of the relationship between cannabis and other illicit drug use. Cannabis users differ from nonusers in a variety of ways before they use cannabis that makes them more likely to use other illicit drugs. Controlling for these factors reduces the strength of the association, indicating that some part of the association can be explained by selective recruitment. Nonetheless, the fact that the association persists after controlling for these factors provides support for some type of causal relationship between cannabis and other illicit drug use.

Morral et al. have questioned the validity of testing the common factor model by testing if relationships between cannabis use and other drugs persist after controlling for indicators of the preexisting propensity to use cannabis and other drugs. Their data suggested that this research strategy would only be successful if the indicators were perfectly correlated with the propensity to use cannabis and other drugs. When the indicators were less than perfectly reliable, there were still spuriously high associations between cannabis use and the use of other illicit drugs after statistically controlling for the indicators.

A Shared Genetic Vulnerability to Drug Dependence

Behavior genetic studies of identical and non-identical twins suggest another common causal explanation of the association between cannabis and other illicit drug use, namely, a shared genetic vulnerability to develop dependence on alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco. The genetic contribution to dependence on “harder” drugs is less certain because rates of use in these twin studies have been low but the same shared genetic factors also appear to be involved.

Lynskey et al. (2003) used a twin study design to test the hypothesis that the association between cannabis

and other illicit drug use can be explained by shared genes and environment. They examined the relationship between cannabis and other illicit drug use in 311 monozygotic (MZ) (136) and dizygotic (DZ) (175) Australian twin pairs in which one twin had and the other twin had not used cannabis before the age of 17 years. This study provided a strong test of the common cause hypothesis, where this was shared susceptibility genes, shared environment (e.g., the family in which the twins grew up), or some combination of shared genes and environment. If the association was attributable to a shared environment, then discordant twins raised together should not differ in the use of other illicit drugs. Similarly, if the association was attributable to shared genetic vulnerability to drug dependence, then there should be no difference in the use of other illicit drugs between monozygotic twins who did and did not use cannabis before age 17.

Lynskey et al. found that the twin who had used cannabis before age 17 was more likely to have used sedatives, hallucinogens, stimulants, and opioids than their co-twin who had not. Twins who had used cannabis were also more likely to report abuse or dependence on cannabis and other illicit drugs than their twin who did not. These relationships persisted after controlling for other non-shared environmental factors that predicted an increased risk of developing drug abuse or dependence and when the analysis was confined to twin pairs in which both had used cannabis at some time in their lives.

Since the publication of Lynskey et al.’s findings, a few studies have adopted improved methodologies to assess whether shared genetic or environmental factors explain at least part of the association between cannabis and other illicit drug use. All studies have used large longitudinal study designs, and some have used sibling or twin designs to replicate Lynskey et al.’s methodology.

Some studies have supported a “gateway” effect. Rebellon and Gundy (2006) analyzed three waves of the National Youth Survey, a nationally representative panel study of 1,725 American adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17. If the association between cannabis and other illicit drug use was attributed to shared environmental triggers, associations should no longer be seen after taking into account personal stressors and emotions, and neighborhood, school, and family influences. After adjustment, the association remained

statistically significant with those who reported using cannabis before illicit drugs being three to five times more likely to use other illicit drugs compared with those who did not.

Fergusson et al. (2006) assessed the common causal hypothesis against data collected prospectively on the CHDS cohort of New Zealand children followed since birth in mid-1977. The study used annual assessments of the frequency of cannabis as well as other illicit drug use between the ages of 14 and 25. The authors used fixed-effects regression models to control for possible confounders, environmental and genetic, on the association between cannabis use and other illicit drug use at age 25. After comprehensive adjustment for observed and non-observed confounding, the association between frequency of cannabis use and other illicit drug use remained statistically significant. The strength of the association between frequency of cannabis use and other illicit drug use decreased with age (Fergusson et al. 2006).

The challenge in disentangling the nature of the association between cannabis and illicit drugs becomes apparent when analyses of the same dataset using slightly different strategies produce different results. For example, Lessem et al. (2006) and Cleveland and Wiebe (2008) both used analyzed data from the nationally representative National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) study. To replicate Lynskey et al.'s findings, Lessem and colleagues tested three aspects of the gateway hypothesis: whether there was (1) an association between early cannabis use and later illicit drug use ($n = 18,286$) and whether the association remained after taking into account (2) familial factors in 360 sibling pairs, and (3) genetic and environmental factors among discordant pairs. The authors used the three waves of longitudinal data available from the Add Health dataset to apply a mix of longitudinal and sibling design methodologies. This was an improvement on Lynskey and colleagues' study, whose retrospective self-reports of cannabis use were susceptible to recall bias. After controlling for important confounding factors, cannabis users were more likely to use other illicit drugs (OR = 1.83 [95% CI: 1.58, 2.13]) (Lessem et al. 2006).

Cleveland and Wiebe (2008) tested the "gateway effect" theory by building on Lynskey et al.'s genetically informative design. Instead of restricting the sample to discordant twin pairs, Cleveland and Wiebe used three

waves of longitudinal data from all same-gender twin pairs to overcome two limitations of the Lynskey et al. study: the use of the discordant twin pairs, which threatened the generalizability of the results to the wider population, and the retrospective self-reports of cannabis use, which may have led to both underreporting or overreporting of adolescent use.

Cleveland and Wiebe used the magnitude of within-pair differences for adolescent cannabis use to predict the magnitude of later within-pair hard drug use differences in young adulthood. They hypothesized that if the effect was genetic, within-pair cannabis use differences should not predict subsequent within-twin drug use differences in MZ twins, since MZ twins have the same genome. On the other hand, genetic differences could explain both initial and subsequent difference in cannabis and hard drug use between DZ twins. While examining MZ and DZ twins separately, earlier cannabis use differences predicted later drug use only among DZ twins ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$), whereas differences consistent with the gateway hypothesis were not found among genetically identical MZ twins ($\beta = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$). The finding provides support for the interpretation that frequency of earlier cannabis use and later hard drug use may be affected by a genetically influenced behavioral trajectory, rather than a "gateway" effect of cannabis.

Finally, there is emerging evidence that the temporal order of tobacco and cannabis use implied by the gateway hypothesis may not be universal. In a study of 1943 young adults followed up in Victoria, Patton et al. (2005) found that after controlling for confounders, frequent cannabis use at age 21 predicted a threefold increase in the development of tobacco dependence at age 24. The same was not true of alcohol dependence. These findings add more than one public health dimension to the debate. Early cannabis use may be a "reverse gateway" drug that increases the risk of regular tobacco use and dependence.

Testing Pharmacological Explanations

According to the hypothesis that the pharmacological effects of cannabis use predispose regular cannabis users to use other illicit drugs, cannabis use produces changes in the brain that sensitize cannabis users to the euphoric effects of other drugs. Animal studies suggest a number of plausible mechanisms that could explain

why cannabis use could increase the likelihood of using other illicit drugs. First, animal studies indicate that there are common neural pathways that underlie the rewarding effects of cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and nicotine. All of these drugs act on the dopaminergic neurotransmitter systems that are involved in the “reward center” in the midbrain, the nucleus accumbens. Second, animal studies indicate that the cannabinoid and opioid systems in the brain interact with each other, influencing the analgesic and euphoric effects of cannabinoids and opioids, and the effects that each type of drug has on dopaminergic systems in the midbrain. Third, mice genetically altered to be deficient in CB1 receptors find opioids less rewarding than normal mice. Fourth, studies indicate that the corticotropin-releasing factor, which is involved in withdrawal symptoms from alcohol, opioids, and cocaine is also released when rats are treated with cannabinoid antagonists.

Animal studies also provide a potential way of directly testing whether these neural mechanisms may explain the relationship observed between cannabis and other illicit drug use in humans. Specifically, animal studies may reveal self-administration of cannabinoids like THC “primes” animals to self-administer other illicit drugs when given the opportunity. Some animal studies have found evidence for cross-sensitivity between cannabinoids and opioids, although in one study this was only observed in a strain of rats that were highly responsive to drug effects.

A number of features of these studies raise doubts about their relevance to “gateway” patterns of adolescent drug use. First, these effects were produced by injecting high doses of cannabinoids whereas most adolescents only smoke cannabis intermittently. Only a minority of adolescents who use cannabis very heavily would expose themselves to equivalent doses of THC. Second, the cross-sensitization between cannabinoids and opioids was symmetrical: that is, animals that were administered opioids were cross-sensitive to cannabinoids and vice versa. This suggests that if opioids were more readily available than cannabis, then opioids would be a gateway to cannabis use.

The Effects of Delaying Gateway Drug Use

If cannabis use increases the use of other illicit drugs then, in principle, the use of these illicit drugs can be reduced by delaying or preventing adolescent cannabis

use. Programs that delay the use of alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis should also reduce the rates of other illicit drug use. Most prevention studies have evaluated programs that aim to prevent tobacco use and to delay alcohol use, the most widely used drugs in adolescence. These studies have provided some suggestive evidence that preventing or delaying tobacco and alcohol use reduces rates of cannabis use.

For several reasons it has been much harder to assess whether delaying cannabis use reduces the use of other illicit drugs. First, many preventive programs that address illicit drug use have not been evaluated and in those programs that have, it has been difficult to demonstrate any effects on the use of less commonly used illicit drugs. Second, if the gateway hypothesis is correct, even the most effective prevention programs would produce very modest reductions in the use of other illicit drugs. This is because of both their modest impacts on cannabis use and the relative rarity of other illicit drug use in representative samples of youth. Third, very large sample sizes would be needed to provide adequate statistical power to detect any effect that delaying cannabis use may have on the use of other illicit drugs. Given these difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that very few studies to date have been able to discover what if any effects delaying cannabis use has on the likelihood of using other illicit drugs.

An Overall Evaluation

The case for there being a causal relationship between cannabis use and other illicit drug use can be summarized by evaluating the available evidence against Bradford Hill’s criteria of causation. There is a reasonably *strong* association between (especially regular) cannabis use and other illicit drug use that has been consistently observed over 30 years in the USA and other developed societies. There is a fair degree of *specificity* with cannabis use being more strongly associated with other illicit drug use than alcohol or tobacco use. There is a *biological gradient* or dose–response relationship in that it is the young people who are the earliest and most frequent cannabis users who have the highest likelihood of using other illicit drugs.

Animal studies are supportive of *biological plausibility* in suggesting a biological mechanism that would explain the relationship between cannabis and other types of illicit drug use, namely, that all of these drugs act on the same dopamine-mediated reward systems in

the brain; that cannabinoids and opioids interact with each other and show cross-tolerance; and that similar mechanisms may underlie the experience of withdrawal symptoms from all of these drugs. The results are broadly *coherent* with the natural history and epidemiology of cannabis and other illicit drug use.

Nonetheless, the role of cannabis in the “gateway” pattern of drug use remains controversial largely because it is difficult to exclude the possibility that the association reflects the operation of common causes. A simulation study suggests that the gateway pattern can be explained by the common characteristics of those who use cannabis and other drugs. This finding has to be balanced against (1) a number of well-controlled longitudinal studies, which suggest that selective recruitment to cannabis use does not wholly explain the association between cannabis use and the use of other illicit drugs and (2) discordant twin studies, which suggest that shared genes and environment do not wholly explain the association. There remains the possibility that cannabis use makes a direct causal contribution to the risk of using other illicit drugs.

The Prospects of Resolving the Question

An informed choice can be made between the competing explanations of the gateway hypothesis in the light of the outcomes of four types of research: (1) direct animal tests of pharmacological hypotheses in so far as these can be done under conditions that plausibly resemble patterns of cannabis use among young adults; (2) large, better designed intervention studies to test whether preventing or delaying the onset of cannabis use reduces the use and other illicit drug use; (3) more behavior genetic studies using the discordant twin design to test the roles of shared genes and environment as explanations of the co-occurrence of cannabis and other types of illicit drug use; and (4) more rigorous tests of the effects of drug policies such as those in the Netherlands that aim to separate the markets for cannabis and other illicit drugs.

Cross-References

► [Substance Use Risk and Protective Factors](#)

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Gay-Straight Alliances

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The past decade has revealed heightened recognition of the harassment, bullying, social exclusion, physical assault, and other forms of victimization directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth (Kosciw et al. 2009). Homophobic harassment and victimization experiences are now considered to be a common part of growing up for LGBT youth. These

experiences have significant social and psychological tolls on youth; research has now related them to significant increases in health risk behaviors. Most notably, research indicates that victimization contributes to harmful behaviors, such as substance abuse and attempted suicide, as well as harmful psychological effects, such as depression and low self-esteem (Bontempo and D'Augelli 2002; Wyss 2004). In addition to placing youth at risk for risky behaviors and mental health problems, the mistreatment places youth at risk for school failure, lack of access to education, and the numerous long-term negative effects associated with lack of educational achievement (see, e.g., Szalacha 2003). Importantly, it is not only the long-term effects that are problematic; victimization experiences negatively impact LGBT youth's everyday educational experiences, making them feel uncomfortable or unsafe in school and, when they respond, leading them to be viewed as disciplinary problems and as youth who are disengaged from school and academics (see, e.g., Kosciw et al. 2009). Schools, especially junior high and high schools, appropriately have been viewed as hostile territory for youth who do not closely conform to traditional gender roles; and it is this lack of conformity that contributes to an accumulation of risk for negative outcomes for sexual minority youth.

Among the many efforts to address the harms that develop from mistreatment at school has been the development of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). GSA's are student-led school clubs for LGBT youth, as well as those who question their sexual identity and orientation, and their straight (heterosexual) allies. GSAs typically are formed by students who are concerned about their school's unsafe climate for LGBT students and who seek to improve the climate for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender appearance. Although sometimes portrayed as exclusive groups, GSAs typically include larger numbers of straight students than LGBT students (Herdt et al. 2007). GSA's help provides a safe place for students to receive information, education, and support (Griffin et al. 2004). They do so in an environment that provides students with safe places to engage in student-driven advocacy or just "hang out." Like other school-based clubs, GSAs typically have regular meetings, have a school-employee as an advisor, and plan school and community events. Thus, although GSAs continue to provide

support for LGBT students, they have evolved into organizations with several purposes. Many GSAs exist as an alternative social environment in the school, a place to "hang out" that is safe and supportive for a wide range of "alternative" students who do not easily fit into the dominant culture of their schools. At their core, GSA's seem concerned most with social justice, which helps account for their attraction of a wide variety of students with different concerns about how people are treated and how society should treat them.

Although GSAs have attracted some controversy and individual GSA groups have met with varying levels of acceptance by school administrations, they have been noted to provide important and effective support for students. The presence of a GSA associates with greater student safety. In fact, GSAs are linked to fewer student reports of harassment and victimization due to actual or perceived sexual orientation; and they are associated with better educational and health outcomes for sexual minority youth. Recent evidence suggests that GSAs do make a difference in school climates and for individual students (Lee 2002). In schools that have GSAs, both students and school personnel report more supportive climates for LGBT students (Szalacha 2003); and sexual minority students in schools that have GSAs report lower rates of victimization and suicide attempts (Goodenow et al. 2006). Notably, out of several strategies that are successful in promoting safety and well-being at school, GSAs appear to have the strongest influence on school climate for LGBT youth (Szalacha 2003). Given the risks LGBT youth face, these are quite impressive findings.

Several factors help account for GSAs' positive effects. GSAs provide a space for LGBT youth to meet other LGBT adolescents and straight allies. These relationships are likely beneficial because they can discuss similar experiences and feelings other youth may not understand and because they may give LGBT youth the sense that they are not alone and that they can build supportive relationships. These are important resources in that one of the most often cited risk factors associated with sexual minority status is social isolation (Bontempo and D'Augelli 2002; Goodenow et al. 2006; Resnick et al. 1997). When students who identify as LGBT feel lonely and ostracized, this isolation can contribute to low self-

esteem, depression, and even suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Resnick et al. 1997). These findings are not surprising given that normative adolescence involves an increased reliance on friendship and peer support. Without structured groups like GSAs, sexual minority youth may not have the support that comes from friendships and supportive peer environments.

GSA's also may be successful to the extent that they address youth's sense of discrimination due to their sexual minority status. Studies indicate, for example, that the experience of discrimination, as well as the perception of being treated badly or discriminated against because others believe that they were gay, contributes to emotional distress among LGBT youth. For example, a recent study of over 1,000 9th to 12th graders found higher depressive symptomatology among LGBT youth. LGBT youth were also more likely than heterosexual, nontransgendered youth to report suicidal ideation and self-harm (Almeida et al. 2009). The study also showed, however, that perceived discrimination accounted for increased depressive symptomatology among LGBT males and females, and that it also accounted for an elevated risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation among LGBT males. Perceived discrimination is a likely contributor to emotional distress among LGBT youth. Efforts that alleviate the sense of discrimination are likely to help alleviate the risks associated with sexual minority status.

In addition to addressing discrimination, GSAs address issues of school climate. Research on the harmful effects of a hostile school climate supports the claims that the suggested interventions would improve school experiences for LGBT youth. Hiding one's sexual orientation, or experiencing social problems because of it, correlates with substance abuse, suicide, depression, and high-risk behavior. Daily school experiences, such as being verbally harassed, hearing homophobic speech, or being bullied, exacerbate the challenges of developing a healthy personal identity. Of youth reporting high victimization, LGBT youth are significantly more likely than heterosexual peers to have engaged in other risk behaviors such as sexual risk, truancy due to fear, and suicide attempts (Bontempo and D'Augelli 2002). Thus, the combination of sexual minority status and victimization may have

a synergistic effect on risk behaviors. GSAs may reduce the negative effects of victimizing school environments and, by doing so, address a fundamental factor that places some minority youth at risk for negative outcomes.

In addition to providing youth with support from the mistreatment of peers, GSAs provide support for youth who have conflicts with their families. There is no doubt that sexual minority youth can suffer from conflict with their families, and that they may be at higher risk for maltreatment (Carragher and Rivers 2002; D'Augelli 2002). An analysis of data from seven population-based studies of high school students recently reported that sexual minority youth are at higher risk for familial abuse than are heterosexual peers (Saewyc et al. 2006). Intrafamilial abuse may be triggered by "coming out" or by being suspected to be or discovered to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Savin-Williams 1994; Wilbur et al. 2006). Sexual minority youth are overrepresented among maltreated children because of family rejection and abuse related to sexual orientation; for example, a recent study found that 34% of former foster care participants reported being sexual minority at intake into the child welfare system (Lenz-Rashid 2006). Arguably, the most powerful expression of those family conflicts, as well as its severity, is the high percentage of sexual minority youth who run away from home (Cochran et al. 2002). By providing a safe haven, GSAs can help adolescents feel supported and address the negative aspects of family life.

Yet another important reason that GSAs help youth is that they offer opportunities for leadership and social involvement; GSAs provide environments for youth to build their sense of efficacy and foster resilience. As it has been aptly noted, a focus on the risks of sexual minority status can hide their resilience (see Russell 2005). GSAs vary in their activities but they often seek to educate the rest of the student body about sexual minority youth's issues, participate in activism, and advocate for better treatment of students. They are unique in that they tend to be led by students rather than by adults (Miceli 2005). As a result, youth involved in GSAs often confront not only heterosexism and homophobia among their peers but also often bias and discrimination on the part of educational institutions and adults (Russell et al. 2009). Contemporary GSAs

provide unique opportunities for the development of youth leadership, activism, and engagement in social change.

Same-sex sexuality constitutes one of the most hotly contested social issues. Although one might think of it as contested among politicians and society at large, it is important to keep in mind that it is especially contested among adolescents. Sexual minority youths can suffer greatly due to their peers' perceptions of who they are and for what they represent. GSA's provide unique opportunities to support youth and for some to discover their capacity to become agents of change in issues and causes that they deeply care about.

Cross-References

► Sexual Minority Youth

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Gender Coding

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► **Gender Coding** are the signals that individuals manifest externally and that indicate their sexuality or relative masculinity or femininity. Individuals may use their outward appearance to communicate implicitly

gender identity and ► [Sex Roles and Gender Roles](#), or use their appearance to avoid doing so. Gender coding can reflect a wide spectrum of sex differences. Codes can display signals related specifically to reproduction, such as becoming impregnated. They can involve signals associated with hormonal differences, such as developing breasts (or augmenting or reducing them) or growing a beard (or not). They also can take the form of behaviors that relate to hormonal influences on development, such as competitiveness or nurturance. They also can relate to socially imposed or sanctioned roles, such as clothing or hair styles or specific occupations. Coding may become manifested in unique ways; one person may demonstrate coding that appears congruent in multiple ways yet another individual may display different signals that present incongruity or disharmony.

Gender coding is of particular significance to the study of adolescence. Adolescents are sometimes socialized in varying ways dependent on gender, with certain elements like a curfew maintaining a stricter code for girls (Peters 1994). In addition, adolescents have been known to be susceptible to more stringent conceptions of gender roles, and their enactment of gender codes has been known to be less flexible during this period than it might later in life (Measor et al. 1996). The extent to which there is flexibility during adolescence, however, may vary. Flexibility in adolescents' expressions of masculine and feminine traits may vary as a function of situational contexts, such as being in different peer groups (Leszczynski and Strough 2008); and they also may vary depending on the historical contexts, as indicated by recent research emphasizing that ► [gender intensification](#), long assumed to occur during adolescence, may not be true for contemporary adolescents (Priess et al. 2009).

Cross-References

► [Gender Identity](#)

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Gender Complementation

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Gender complementation is part of the process of gender identification that involves the extent to which individuals recognize, and respond to, the differences between their own sense of self and those of members of the other sex. Complementation allows for differentiation and individuation; it is achieved by functioning differently than, and in reciprocation to, others by responding to their activities, behaviors, and reactions. Psychoanalytic schools of thought propose that this dimension of development proved crucial to gender identification, and the establishment of a person's distinctive ► [gender identity](#) (Money 1972, 1973). A more recent study that proposes a theory of self-construction invokes this element as an important part of the steps that comprise the experience of designing a self (Guichard 2009). In order to understand and conceptualize a “self,” a person theoretically must reject a representation of an entity or subject considered to be opposite or “other” (Guichard 2009). In the adolescent process of establishing a distinctive gender ► [Gender Role and Identity](#), this step would involve discriminating between which characteristics one would associate with his/her self, and distinguishing between these elements, and those that the person attributed to the other or “opposite” sex.

Cross-References

► [Gender Identity](#)

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Gender Dysphoria

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Gender dysphoria, sometimes discussed as “gender dysphoria syndrome” (see Fisk 1973), refers to individuals’ subjective distress that emerges from discrepancy between their sense of self, particularly their ► [gender identity](#), and their association with their biological sex or gender attributes (de Vries et al. 2007). Gender dysphoria can emerge due to other people’s misidentification of one’s gender as well as the social roles associated with gender (Id.). Dysphoric experiences also can derive from individuals’ dissatisfaction with their own genital anatomy when these organs prove incongruous with that individual’s perceived gender identity or role. Responses to dysphoria include psychological interventions, such as psychotherapy, as well as medical treatment, such as surgery, hormonal intervention, and other sex reassignment procedures that can either masculinize or feminize an individual’s primary or secondary sexual characteristics.

Gender dysphoria is distinguishable from ► [gender identity](#) disorder in that gender identity disorder is a formal diagnosis that adopts a categorical nosological perspective, which means that an individual either does or does not meet the criteria for gender identity disorder. Approaching distress relating to gender identity as dysphoric rather than disorder allows for a more inclusive and broader examination. This approach is reflected in measures seeking to understand the experience of dysphoria. Efforts have aimed to develop multidimensional questionnaires that can tap into subtle nuances of this experience. Most notably, one measure conceptualizes gender dysphoria as it relates to a bipolar continuum with a male pole and a female

pole and, at the same time, with varying degrees of gender dysphoria, gender uncertainty, or gender identity transitions between the poles (see, e.g., Deogracias et al. 2007). These are important developments in that they are necessary first steps in understanding not only the nature of dysphoria but also what types of responses it requires, something considerably important since there continues to be considerable disagreement about how to respond to adolescents’ gender dysphoria (such as whether physical treatment should be given before adulthood or whether a focus should be placed on the attainment of different ► [puberty](#) levels).

Cross-References

► [Gender Identity](#)

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Gender Identification

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Gender identification refers to the process by which children develop a fundamental sense of belonging to one sex and not the other (Zucker 2002). In this experience, individuals determine which characteristics of their gender prove applicable to their own sense of self. This experience includes individuals’ decisions about which elements associated with the other sex prove separate from their own selves and gender identities. Early research had assumed that parents had the greatest influence on the process and that it was generally completed before children entered school. More

recent studies have expanded the spectrum of these factors, both in terms of the time frame and in terms of influencing factors (and now include, e.g., siblings, peers, teachers, and media characters) (see, e.g., Katz and Ksansnak 1994). This later research also has challenged the inherent desirability of traditional sex-typed patterns of behavior. As such, patterns might not prove adaptive or beneficial in a changing world (see Katz and Ksansnak 1994).

Cross-References

► [Gender Role and Identity](#)

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Gender Identity

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Gender identity involves the inner conviction that one is male, female, ambivalent, or neutral. This definition is in contrast to gender role, which is the outward appearance or image that one gives, through behavior and manner, that indicates he or she is to be classed as male or female.

Gender identity is considered a multidimensional construct that results from many factors, especially knowledge of one's membership in a particular gender category, sense of one's compatibility with that group, pressure to conform to the gender category; one's attitudes toward gender groups, and the centrality of one's gender relative to other identities (see Egan and Perry 2001; Tobin et al. 2010). Gender identity (as well as ► [Sex Roles and Gender Roles](#)) can be heavily influenced by the ways individuals are reared, and research continues to emphasize the importance familial systems have on the construction and development of gender identity (McHale et al. 2003).

Cross-References

- [Gender Coding](#)
- [Gender Complementation](#)
- [Gender Identification](#)

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Gender Identity Disorder

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Overview

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) has become an important area of research relating to adolescent development. This essay begins with a presentation of key terms that are necessary to understand this disorder. The discussion then focuses on the phenomenology of the disorder as it relates to adolescents, its developmental roots, diagnostic criteria, epidemiology, comorbidities, developmental trajectories, assessment, and treatment. The essay ends with a brief highlight of cutting-edge research in this area and promising directions in research and treatment.

Understanding Key Terminology

Understanding Gender Identity Disorder first requires clarifying definitions of terms typically used in this area of research and practice. The term “sex” refers to characteristics of biological maleness and femaleness. In humans, the most widely known attributes that comprise biological sex include the sex-determining genes, the sex chromosomes, the H-Y antigen, the gonads, sex hormones, the internal reproductive system, and the

external genitalia (Migeon and Wisniewski 1998). Recently, there has also been much interest in the prospect that the human brain has particular sex-dimorphic neuroanatomic structures that may develop during prenatal physical sex differentiation (Arnold 2003; Grumbach et al. 2003). “Gender” refers to the psychological or behavioral characteristics associated with males and females (Ruble et al. 2006). There has been the tendency to use the terms sex and gender interchangeably, which can result in confusion about whether one is discussing the biological or psychological characteristics that differentiate females from males (Gentile 1993). “Gender identity” refers to an individual’s sense of being one sex, a subjective sense of maleness/femaleness (Koestner and Aube 1995); one of the first appearances this term made in the professional literature was when Stoller (1964, p. 453) defined the term “core gender identity” as a child’s developing a “fundamental sense of belonging to one sex.” “Gender role” has been used to refer to behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits prescribed by society, in a given culture and historical period, as masculine or feminine. Hence, it refers to what a particular society has deemed to be “appropriate” or typical male and female social role characteristics (Roest et al. 2010; Ruble et al. 2006). Lastly, “sexual orientation” refers to an individual’s response to sexual stimuli. Sexual orientation is usually classified by the sex of the person to whom one is sexually attracted. An individual’s sexual orientation can be identified along a continuum of the categories heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual (Zucker 2006). In this essay, sexual orientation is referred to in relation to an individual’s biological sex.

Phenomenology

Adolescents with GID show a strong psychological identification with the opposite sex and also state a strong wish to become a member of the opposite sex and extreme discontent with their biological sex. In its complete form, adolescents who present with gender dysphoria demonstrate a frequently verbalized desire to be a member of the opposite sex and anatomic dysphoria, displayed verbally and/or behaviorally (e.g., girls identify the wish to have a penis, to masculinize their bodies through the use of cross-sex hormones, and to have bilateral mastectomy). Some adolescent females also verbalize the wish to have both

a hysterectomy and oophorectomy (surgical removal of an ovary or ovaries). Adolescent males identify a desire to have their penis and testes removed and to undergo surgery to create a neovagina and clitoris, to feminize their bodies through the use of cross-sex hormones, electrolysis, and decreasing the size of the Adam’s apple. Adolescents with GID also reveal a strong desire to pass socially as a member of the opposite sex, a goal adolescents frequently try to attain by adjusting phenotypic social cues of gender, including hair and clothing, and taking on a new name associated with the opposite sex.

Onset of Gender Dysphoria

Often, adolescents with severe GID have demonstrated cross-gender behavior in early childhood (“early-onset”). There are also increasing numbers of adolescents who do not present with a clear history of cross-gender behavior in childhood who may or may not meet all criteria for GID (“late-onset”). Some of these adolescents may have gender dysphoria that is secondary to transvestic fetishism or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). In these late-onset cases, there is generally no clear indication of pervasive cross-gender behavior in childhood (Zucker 2006). The majority of adolescents with early-onset GID are sexually attracted to individuals of their birth sex. Yet, most of the adolescents who present with late-onset GID are sexually attracted to the opposite sex.

Case Example 1 (Early Onset)

Amanda (IQ = 115), who had adopted the name of Skip, is a 17-year-old biological female. Skip lived with her mother and three brothers. Skip’s biological parents separated when Skip was 13, following ongoing physical abuse perpetrated by Skip’s father against her mother. Skip witnessed this abuse and also disclosed that she was both physically and sexually abused by her father.

During interviews, Skip reported that, as young as three or four, she felt that she would rather be a boy but did not tell anyone about these feelings until the age of 13. Her mother remarked that, due to Skip’s “boyish” looks and behavior, her friends would frequently comment that she had four sons, rather than three sons and a daughter. By grade 6, Skip’s mother noticed that she had “boy-typical” interests but remarked that she “did

not pay much attention to it.” Skip described herself as a “classic tomboy” as a child. She indicated that she had more male friends and predominantly engaged in boys’ games, active sports, and rough-and-tumble play. She gradually began altering her appearance to look more masculine during grades 7 and 8 and fully transitioned into a male role in grade 9.

Skip noted feeling depressed “on again and off again” since grade 8. Her grades began to drop at that time and she recalled feeling that there was “no point” doing school work anymore. Her mood worsened after the start of high school and she felt particularly uncomfortable having to participate in an all-girls gym class. Hence, her school attendance began to decline. At that time, Skip acknowledged a few occasions of self-harm. Skip identified discomfort with trying out for female sports teams during high school and, therefore, she no longer participated in activities she previously enjoyed.

Skip identified as a heterosexual male. She explained that it was difficult to look into the mirror because she felt she was in the “wrong body.” Skip described puberty as a very difficult time because she had “never really perceived [herself] as female until puberty started” at the age of 12. Skip began menstruating at the age of 12 and found it to be “surreal.” When this began, she finally started to realize that she was developing as a female. She shared that it had been “hard for [her] to believe it would happen” because, even though her mother had prepared her for it, she did not think it would occur. Skip currently binds her breasts and is distressed by the fact that she has large breasts. Skip was involved in a romantic relationship with a female but indicated that she has never been able to be nude in front of another person.

Case Example 2 (Late Onset)

Samantha (IQ = 123), who had adopted the name Sam, is a 17-year-old biological female. Sam lived with her parents and brother. As a child, Sam enjoyed playing with stuffed animals and board games. She played more with girls than boys. From a young age, Sam displayed a lack of social tact, often showing a lack of sensitivity to the feelings of others. She experienced a lot of ostracism from her peers as both a child and adolescent. When younger, Sam wore clothing designed for girls and most preferred wearing clothing with sparkles and

“glitz,” such as clothing with sequins. Her mother remarked that Sam loved trying on her long, dangling earrings and also enjoyed wearing bikinis, although she never liked the color pink. Sam disputed the history her parents provided and stated that she felt as if something was “off” since age 3. She also felt that she was going to grow up to be like her father. During childhood, Sam did not verbalize a desire to be a boy.

During interviews, Sam explained that she decided to cut her hair very short a few months prior to the referral to our clinic. After she got it cut, her father asked her if she was a lesbian. She then told him that she was transsexual. Sam had her hair cut the same day that her mother was admitted to hospital for major surgery. Sam’s parents wanted to help Sam “discern if she is on the right path, whatever that may be.” Sam explained her view that girls are “conniving” and “evil” and said she does not want to date girls because she does not like the female body. In relation to her birth sex, Sam identified as heterosexual. Due to her gender dysphoria, Sam identified as a gay male.

These two cases reflect two very different developmental routes to gender dysphoria. The first client showed a more typical pathway to GID, with a clear history of girlhood masculinity and, in adolescence, development of homoerotic sexual orientation. The second client followed a relatively atypical developmental route to gender dysphoria. In addition to GID, this client was also diagnosed with PDD Not Otherwise Specified.

Diagnostic Criteria

Adolescents diagnosed with GID, as outlined in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association 1994), show a “strong and persistent cross-gender identification” manifest in four potential indicators. These indicators are a stated desire to be the other sex, frequent passing as the other sex, desire to live or be treated as the other sex, and the conviction that he or she has the typical feelings and reactions of the other sex. In addition, adolescents with GID experience distress and discomfort regarding their sex, manifest in two potential indicators: preoccupation with removing primary and secondary sex characteristics or the belief that one was born the wrong sex (Table 1).

Gender Identity Disorder. Table 1 DSM-IV TR criteria for Gender Identity Disorder (adolescents)

1.	A strong and persistent cross-gender identification (not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex)
	In adolescents, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as a stated desire to be the other sex, frequent passing as the other sex, desire to live or be treated as the other sex, or the conviction that he or she has the typical feelings and reactions of the other sex
2.	Persistent discomfort with his or her sex or sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex
	In adolescents, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as preoccupation with getting rid of primary and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., request for hormones, surgery, or other procedures to physically alter sexual characteristics to simulate the other sex) or belief that he or she was born the wrong sex
3.	The disturbance is not concurrent with a physical intersex condition
4.	The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning
	Specify if (for sexually mature individuals): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sexually attracted to males - Sexually attracted to females - Sexually attracted to both - Sexually attracted to neither

Source: American Psychiatric Association (2000). Copyright 2000 American Psychiatric Association.

Epidemiology

Prevalence

Similar to GID in childhood, epidemiological studies on the prevalence of GID in youth have not been carried out. As a result, estimates of prevalence have been inferred from measures such as the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach and Edelbrock 1983). On the CBCL, the percentage of adolescent boys and girls whose parents endorsed the item, “Wishes to be of opposite sex” was exceptionally low and, for certain sex by age, the percentage is 0 (Achenbach and Edelbrock 1983). Therefore, in comparison to these base rates, even an intermittent desire to be the opposite sex is highly atypical.

Referral Rates

Research in the authors’ clinic, the only specialized research-oriented gender clinic in child and adolescent psychiatry in North America, has been ongoing for over a period of 30 years. Since 1976, the rates of referral for adolescents has been relatively stable until a sharp increase was noted starting in 2004 (Zucker et al. 2008). This trend also has been noted by five other gender identity clinics across Europe and North America (de Vries and Cohen-Kettenis 2009). There are a few possibilities that could account for this rise in referral rates. It is possible that recent media interest has raised awareness about gender identity issues. Similarly, there are various Internet sites which offer information regarding GID and transgenderism and these may aid adolescents in identifying their own issues. It may also be that more adolescents are identifying as transgendered at earlier ages. Or, perhaps, this represents an increase in the true incidence of GID among adolescents (Zucker et al. 2008).

Sex Differences in Referral Rates

In contrast to children, where significantly more males are referred to specialized gender clinics than females (Zucker 2004), the ratio is close to 1:1 in adolescents 12 and older (Cohen-Kettenis and Pfafflin 2003; Zucker et al. 2002). Perhaps this tapered sex ratio is indicative of a true difference in prevalence rates of GID in males and females in childhood as compared to adolescence. Another possibility is that, while caregivers may be accepting of “tomboyish” behavior in young girls, it is not as easy to disregard intensified distress that may accompany the onset of puberty and concomitant physical sex changes as these girls enter adolescence. Similarly, while cross-gender behavior is less tolerated when displayed by boys during childhood, it may be that extreme cross-gender behavior in adolescence is socially problematic regardless of the sex of the adolescents showing this behavior (Zucker and Cohen-Kettenis 2008).

Comorbidity

On average, youth with GID show as many general behavior problems as referred youth in general (Wallien et al. 2007; Zucker 2006). It is probable that multiple factors contribute to the development of these behavior problems. Among those factors may be both

general risk factors associated with behavior problems in many referred youth (Zucker et al. 2002) and factors specific to their “minority” status as transgender youth, such as stigmatization, peer rejection, and discrimination (Lombardi et al. 2001; Mathay 2002).

Developmental Trajectories

Several important studies have examined the developmental trajectories of GID. Early follow-up studies of young, clinic-referred children (primarily boys) have found high rates of GID desistance, with adult homosexuality shown to be the most likely outcome (Green 1987; Zucker and Bradley 1995; Zuger 1984). Similarly, in the first systematic follow-up report of clinic-referred girls with GID, which included 25 females, a large majority showed desistance, with 88% of the girls not presenting with gender dysphoria at follow-up (Drummond et al. 2008). In contrast, follow-up studies including individuals with GID assessed for the first time in adolescence and adulthood reveal high rates of persistence. Cohen-Kettenis and van Goozen (1997) found that 22 (66.6%) of 33 adolescents proceeded with sex reassignment surgery (SRS). The age of the 22 adolescents at first assessment was 17.5 (range 15–20). Of the 11 who did not receive SRS, 8 were not recommended because they did not receive a diagnosis of GID and 3 clients received a diagnosis but the “real-life test” (i.e., living for a period of time as the opposite sex before proceeding with cross-sex hormonal treatment and surgery) was delayed due to serious co-morbid psychopathology and/or adverse social situations. A more recent study revealed similar findings, with 20 (48.7%) of 41 adolescent clients proceeding with SRS and the majority of the 21 who did not continued to be gender-dysphoric at follow-up, approximately 4 years later (Smith et al. 2002). Little is known about persistence of GID in youth without a childhood onset of gender dysphoria; however, based on clinical impression, most of these youth also show GID persistence (Zucker and Cohen-Kettenis 2008). This discrepancy in the persistence of GID suggests that the gendered sense of self is malleable during childhood, with gender identity becoming more fixed with development.

Assessment

In the authors’ clinic, a comprehensive assessment of adolescents who present with gender dysphoria is

undertaken and includes an assessment of general intelligence, behavior problems, dimensional evaluation of gender identity/gender dysphoria, and sexual orientation. There are many assessment tools available that can complement a clinical interview which confirms the presence of DSM criteria for GID. The measures can be used to establish the degree of current gender dysphoria (Gender Identity/Gender Dysphoria Questionnaire for Adolescents and Adults [Deogracias et al. 2007]; Utrecht Gender Dysphoria Scale [Cohen-Kettenis and van Goozen 1997]; Draw-a-person test [Jolles 1952]; Body image [Lindgren and Pauly 1975]), the extent of both current and childhood cross-gender behavior (Gender Identity/Role Questionnaire-Parent Report [Zucker and Bradley 1995]; Recalled Childhood Gender Identity/Role Scale-Self Report [Zucker et al. 2006]), and characterizations of the adolescent’s sexual orientation, both in fantasy (e.g., crushes, dreams, masturbation) and in behavior (Erotic Response and Sexual Orientation Scale [Storms 1980]; Modified Zuckerman Heterosexual and Homosexual Experiences Scale [Zucker et al. 1996]; Kinsey Interview Ratings-fantasy, behavior [Kinsey et al. 1948]).

Treatment

Traditionally, therapeutic approaches with adolescents have included individual therapy to explore identity consolidation, exploration of alternative pathways, treatment of co-morbid difficulties, social support for family, peer, and school issues, and/or a phased approach to physical treatments. Before recommending hormonal and surgical interventions, clinicians often encourage adolescents to explore alternative pathways, as these interventions are both invasive and costly. Adolescents who are considering alternatives may, for example, explore within individual therapy whether adaptation to a homosexual orientation and lifestyle would be possible. However, in adolescents, as in adults, there is a lack of empirical evidence that psychotherapeutic interventions are effective for decreasing gender dysphoria and this is consistent with clinical impression (Cohen-Kettenis et al. 2008; Zucker 2010).

Regarding biomedical interventions, hormonal therapy has been used. Most notably, Dutch clinicians and researchers have initiated hormonal aspects of sex-reassignment in early-to-mid adolescence, rather than

waiting for the legal age of adulthood. After a comprehensive psychological assessment, adolescents who are recommended for this treatment receive hormonal medication to delay or suppress somatic puberty before the age of 16 but not younger than 12. In the case of persistent gender dysphoria, adolescents are prescribed cross-sex hormonal therapy at the age of 16 and surgical sex reassignment procedures are next offered once adolescents have reached, at the youngest, the age of 18 (de Vries and Cohen-Kettenis 2009). This phased treatment approach with adolescents was developed in consideration of the high rates of persistence of adolescent GID and to minimize the distress experienced by these adolescents by reducing the disjunction between the development of secondary sex characteristics (e.g., in males: hair growth, voice deepening; in females: breast development, menstruation) and felt psychologic gender and, in so doing, enabling these youth to present socially in the cross-gender role (de Vries and Cohen-Kettenis 2009; Smith et al. 2005). Follow-up studies of adolescents in the Dutch clinic 1–5 years post-surgery have found that the gender dysphoria was successfully resolved and the clients were functioning well both socially and psychologically (de Vries and Cohen-Kettenis 2009).

In the authors' clinic, a recent descriptive study to elucidate recommendations regarding puberty-blocking hormonal treatment was conducted with 109 adolescents (54 males; 55 females) referred consecutively between 2000 and 2009. Following an assessment, hormonal therapy to suppress the client's biological puberty was recommended for 66 (60.6%) youth and not recommended for 43 (39.4%). In summary, clinic staff was more likely to recommend blockers for adolescents who had both a history and a current clinical presentation of relatively more extreme cross-gender behavior and gender dysphoria. Further, the staff also was less likely to recommend early hormonal therapy for youth who reported, on average, higher average behavior problem scores on the YSR (Achenbach 1991) and for youth who were in-care, but there was no significant difference in this recommendation as a function of the parent-report CBCL score (Zucker et al. in press). It may be of interest to note that both of the clients in the case studies were referred for individual therapy and to an endocrinologist for blockers to suppress somatic feminization. It will be important to follow the developmental course of

the adolescents involved in this study to determine the long-term effectiveness of this treatment in contributing to the clinical objective of decreasing gender dysphoria and improving general psychosocial well-being.

Current and Future Research

Little is known about the factors involved in the formation of late-onset gender dysphoria without transvestic fetishism. Current research in the authors' clinic is underway and has been designed to better understand how use of the Internet, peer ostracism, and self-concept may be related to adolescent transgender identity. Some of these youth may be uncertain as to their ability to "succeed" in their own gender based on comparisons with members of their birth sex. For youth who present with late-onset gender dysphoria, some of whom have co-morbid pervasive developmental disorders, this may be further tied to social difficulties, in which they have not had success establishing or maintaining connections with same-sex peers. During adolescence, being accepted and included is important in identity formation (Rokash and Neto 2000) and some youth may seek connection and acceptance online. Social ostracism and a lack of a strong social network may have an impact on the amount of time youth who identify as transgender spend online and the ways in which they use the Internet. In one study of 1,158 Dutch adolescents between 10 and 17, it was found that youth who scored higher on a loneliness measure used the Internet significantly more often to experiment with their identity (i.e., they pretended to be someone else—more intelligent, beautiful, outgoing) than youth who were not lonely (Valkenburg and Peter 2008).

The use of the Internet serves as an example of how, as first discussed by Erikson (1963), a major developmental task for adolescents is to establish a sense of who they are by exploring identities. As noted by Turkle (1995), the Internet is an ideal environment for the experimentation and exploration of identity. This exploration directly relates to GID. There is the clinical impression that certain youth diagnosed with GID may, for various reasons, turn to the virtual world for social support and acceptance. Youth with GID who are ostracized by peers and lack a clearly defined sense of self may use the Internet to provide coherence to their identities. It may be that these youth experience a significant vulnerability in their sense of self that is further intensified by facing issues such as social

ostracism and/or influenced by the information they find on the Internet. Adolescent Internet use is an important and timely topic that can be used to enhance the understanding of the distinction between early-onset and late-onset youth with GID and the ways in which gender identity is negotiated by these youth, either similarly or differently, in an online context. This type of work likely would influence clinical work with these youth and inform treatment recommendations.

Cross-References

► Gender Dysphoria

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Gender Intensification

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Overview

The gender intensification hypothesis states that girls and boys experience increased pressure to conform to

culturally sanctioned gender roles during adolescence (Hill and Lynch 1983). These pressures are thought to come from a variety of sources and are intended to prepare adolescents for their adult roles as women and men. This essay summarizes the gender intensification hypothesis and reviews evidence for the intensification of gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior during adolescence. The essay concludes by considering limitations in current investigations of gender intensification and directions for future research.

Terminology

The study of gender development is complicated because, although gender is one of the most well-recognized social categories, its identifiers are extremely diverse and multifaceted (Twenge 1999). Cultures identify “masculine” and “feminine” attributes by the likelihood that each attribute is associated with one sex and not the other. Therefore, a wide range of attributes are fair game in defining gender: personality characteristics, attitudes, leisure activities, occupations, social roles, relationship styles, etc. Three classes of gendered attributes have been the focus of most research on gender intensification: gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior.

Gender-role identity refers to an individual's self-concept of his or her identity. Stated another way, it is the extent to which a person views himself or herself as possessing masculine or feminine attributes. Gender-role identity is commonly studied using self-report inventories, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem 1974) or the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence et al. 1974). Participants rate themselves on a series of attributes, and scores are calculated to represent how masculine (or “instrumental”) and how feminine (or “expressive”) they are.

Gender-role attitudes refer to an individual's ideas about males' and females' rights and about what roles men and women should occupy within society. Those with traditional gender-role attitudes tend to favor separate, socially distinct roles for men and women (e.g., male as breadwinner/female as caretaker within the family). Those with egalitarian gender-role attitudes tend to favor more flexibility in the roles men and women occupy within society and equal rights for both sexes (e.g., equal opportunities for males and females to pursue education, workplace advancement, etc.).

Gender-role attitudes are most commonly studied using self-report measures like the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence and Helmreich 1978), although gender-role attitudes are sometimes assessed through behavioral observation, as well.

Gendered behavior is multifaceted and includes a variety of behaviors that are associated with being male or female. For instance, these behaviors include hobbies, occupations, aspects of sexual/romantic relationships, appearance maintenance, and nonverbal behaviors (smiling; distance between legs when sitting). Although a few standardized measures of gendered behavior exist, such as the Sex Role Behavior Scale (Orlofsky and O'Heron 1987) and Gender Diagnosticity measures (Lippa and Connelly 1990), most studies that examine gendered behavior do not use these established measures. Rather, the definition of gendered behavior often is broadened to include any behavior that shows a reliable gender difference. Thus, behaviors that have no inherent cultural meaning as “masculine” or “feminine” are sometimes discussed in terms of gender development, simply by virtue of showing a gender difference. Thus, depending on the behaviors measured, studies of gendered behavior vary in their usefulness for understanding gender development.

All of these aspects of gender development – identity, attitudes, and behavior – have been considered when testing the gender intensification hypothesis.

The Gender Intensification Hypothesis

Hill and Lynch (1983) proposed the gender intensification hypothesis as a way to explain gender differences that emerge or increase in adolescence. The gender intensification hypothesis states that beginning in adolescence, girls and boys experience increased pressure to conform to culturally sanctioned gender roles. The pressures associated with gender intensification are thought to coincide with pubertal development and come from numerous sources but especially from peers and parents. According to Hill and Lynch, gender intensification causes individuals to become more differentiated in their gender-role identities, attitudes, and behaviors, which presumably will help them form heterosexual relationships and adjust to the socially distinct and occupationally segregated roles of adult women and men.

Hill and Lynch (1983) did not provide original data to support the gender intensification hypothesis, instead relying on a review of previous research to support their ideas. Although they expressed interest in the *socialization* of gender differences, most research Hill and Lynch reviewed focused on gender differences themselves rather than on the processes by which these differences arose. Despite this limitation, Hill and Lynch commendably integrated a vast literature around their central thesis, covering an array of topics such as parent and peer relationships, academic interests and performance, educational and career aspirations, risk-taking and aggressive behaviors, personality characteristics, and mental health. They reported that during adolescence and compared to boys, girls became more concerned about interpersonal relationships and physical appearance and less concerned with educational and career aspirations. Girls also became more self-conscious and more compliant, particularly when they faced hostility toward gender-role violations. Girls were less aggressive than boys and less likely to engage in risk-taking behavior. Across adolescence, both girls and boys were reported to become increasingly aware of gender-appropriate behavior. In support of their emphasis on peers and parents as socializers of gender intensification, Hill and Lynch reported that the degree to which gender differences were found often depended on adolescents' relationships with same- and opposite-sex peers and on parents' own gender-role attitudes. Therefore, Hill and Lynch described numerous instances in which boys and girls, on average, became more gender-stereotypical in their identity, attitudes, and behavior but also acknowledged that individual differences occurred in these domains due to variation in one's environment.

The concept of gender intensification is intuitively appealing because it so readily explains changes that occur during adolescence. However, few empirical studies have tested the gender intensification hypothesis, and those studies that have examined it report mixed results. In addition, most of the research Hill and Lynch reviewed was conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, but gender-role identity and attitudes have become markedly more egalitarian since that time (e.g., Twenge 1997a, b), and consequently younger cohorts of individuals exhibit different patterns of gender-role identities and attitudes than older cohorts do (e.g., Kasen et al. 2006; Stough et al. 2007). Therefore,

a contemporary review of evidence for intensification of gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior is warranted.

Evidence for Intensification of Gender-Role Identity

Research to assess gender-role identity in adolescence has shown little evidence of intensification. In a longitudinal study that examined gender-role identity among adolescents in the USA during the late 1970s, Galambos et al. (1990) found that girls reported higher femininity than boys across grades 6, 7, and 8, but the gender difference in femininity did not increase over time. In contrast, boys reported higher masculinity than girls in sixth grade, and this difference grew across seventh and eighth grades. Therefore, there was evidence of gender *differences* in both femininity and masculinity, but adolescents showed patterns of gender *intensification* only in masculinity.

Boldizar (1991) collected both cross-sectional and longitudinal data on gender-role identity when she developed the Children's Sex Role Inventory, a derivation of the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Her cross-sectional data of US children in grades 3 through 7 confirmed previous findings that girls reported higher feminine gender-role identity, whereas boys reported higher masculinity. Unlike Galambos et al. (1990), however, gender differences in gender-role identity did not increase over a 1-year follow-up period. Similar results have been reported outside of the USA. A cross-sectional study of over 12,000 adolescents in Norway revealed that girls were higher in femininity, whereas boys were slightly higher in masculinity across adolescence, but gender differences did not increase with age (Wichstrøm 1999). Finally, a cross-sectional study of adolescent girls in grades 6 through 12 found only a small and somewhat inconsistent increase in expressivity (a component of femininity that measures traits such as gentleness and sensitivity) and no age differences in instrumentality (a component of masculinity that measures traits such as independence and competitiveness) (Signorella and Frieze 2008). Thus, these studies found little evidence for gender intensification of femininity or masculinity.

More recently, Priess et al. (2009) reported changes in gender-role identity for US children who were adolescents in the mid-2000s. Consistent with earlier findings, they found that girls reported higher feminine

gender-role identity than boys at ages 11, 13, and 15, but neither girls nor boys displayed change in femininity across adolescence. In contrast to previous research, there was no gender difference in masculine gender-role identity at ages 11, 13, or 15, and reports of masculinity did not change systematically over time. Although these authors found no evidence of gender intensification overall, patterns of gender-role identity at the individual level varied somewhat by family characteristics. For instance, girls with older brothers showed smaller increases in femininity over time, whereas boys with older brothers showed greater increases in masculinity over time.

Another recent study assessed expressivity and instrumentality in children and adolescents aged 7–19 (McHale et al. 2009). They found that boys were similar to girls in expressivity at age 7, decreased in expressivity until ages 13–14, and then increased again, becoming almost level with girls by age 19. Girls, on the other hand, did not change in their expressivity over time. With regard to instrumentality, boys were consistently higher than girls, but both boys and girls increased in instrumentality over time. Thus, there was some evidence for temporary gender intensification in expressivity but no evidence for intensification in instrumentality, although the authors noted that the pattern of findings depended in part on adolescents' social experiences and levels of the hormone testosterone.

In summary, little evidence exists for intensification of gender-role identity during adolescence, although these patterns may depend on characteristics of an adolescent's environment.

Evidence for Intensification of Gender-Role Attitudes

A related body of research has examined intensification of gender-role attitudes. The gender intensification hypothesis predicts that gender-role attitudes will become more traditional over time; however, research shows that patterns of attitude change vary by gender. For instance, Galambos et al. (1990) found in their longitudinal study (discussed above) that only adolescent boys became more traditional in their gender-role attitudes, whereas adolescent girls became more egalitarian over time.

Likewise, in a 9-year longitudinal study of adolescents and their families, Crouter et al. (2007) (see also McHale et al. 2001) found that girls tended to become

less traditional in their gender-role attitudes across adolescence whereas boys became more traditional; however, these patterns varied with children's age and birth order, as well as with their parents' traditional gender-role attitudes and the gender of siblings. For instance, children of traditional parents and second-born children reported more traditional gender-role attitudes than children of egalitarian parents and first-born children. Thus, family context may play a considerable role in the nature and extent of gender-role attitude intensification.

Cross-sectional studies have failed to provide support for the hypothesis that gender-role attitudes become increasingly traditional across adolescence. For example, Nelson and Keith (1990) surveyed fifth through eighth graders in the USA and found that girls had less traditional gender-role attitudes than boys, but that both girls' and boys' gender-role attitudes were increasingly flexible at older ages. Likewise, in a study that compared different developmental models of gender-role attitudes, Katz and Ksansk (1994) found that across ages 8–18, girls and to a lesser extent, boys, became more flexible in their attitudes toward their own gendered behavior and more tolerant of gender-role violations in others. A cross-sectional study that used an experimental paradigm instead of self-report measures also found evidence for increased gender flexibility. In this study, Israeli boys and men evaluated a male candidate running for class representative who varied by qualification for the position and conformance to gender-typical behavior (Lobel et al. 2004). Both younger and older adolescents were more likely to exhibit discriminatory behavior toward a peer who violated gender norms than were college students, suggesting that males became more flexible in gender-role attitudes over time.

In summary, the evidence regarding intensification of gender-role attitudes indicates that girls become more egalitarian in their attitudes across adolescence, whereas the pattern of change in boys' attitudes is unclear.

Evidence for Intensification of Gendered Behavior

A large body of research has examined gendered behavior during childhood and adolescence, with particular attention paid to two domains: activities and academic achievement.

Activities

An early review listed several findings that were deemed consistent with gender intensification of behavior. Those included girls' increase in interpersonal concerns, girls' increase in the time they spent talking, girls' decreased value of achievement, girls' decreased involvement in sports, girls' increased time spent in grooming, and boys' increased time spent alone (Richards and Larson 1989). More recently, in a 1-year longitudinal study in the USA, Crouter et al. (1995) observed that adolescent girls and boys became more sex-typed in their household chores over time, particularly in families with traditional gender divisions of labor. Furthermore, girls and boys spent increasing amounts of time with the same-sex parent, particularly if opposite-sex siblings were present in the home. In another study by these researchers, McHale et al. (2009) (see also McHale et al. 2004) measured time spent in stereotypically masculine, stereotypically feminine, and gender-neutral activities for youth aged 7–19. They found that girls participated in more feminine activities than boys, and both girls and boys decreased their participation in feminine activities over time. Likewise, boys participated in more masculine activities than girls, and both groups participated less in these activities over time. This body of research indicates that there are marked gender differences in gendered behavior during adolescence. However, some of these differences exhibit a pattern of intensification during adolescence, whereas others merely reflect a continuation of gendered behavior that began prior to adolescence.

Academics

Gender differences in the domain of academics include differences in performance and motivation. With regard to performance, early reviews pointed to girls' increasing verbal ability and boys' increasing math and spatial ability as markers of gender intensification (see Hill and Lynch 1983). The gender intensification hypothesis also predicted that academic achievement motivation would become increasingly important for boys and decreasingly important for girls as adolescents prepared for their distinct adult roles as men and women. The evidence for gender intensification in academic performance and motivation, however, is weak, and gender differences appear to be decreasing over time.

Academic Performance

In a large meta-analysis on gender differences in mathematical ability that synthesized findings from 100 studies and almost 400 million individuals, Hyde et al. (1990) found that gender differences in mathematics performance changed across age and varied by type of mathematics skill. For computation tasks, girls tended to perform slightly better than boys in elementary and middle school, but there was no gender difference in computation by high school. Girls and boys performed similarly on tests of conceptual understanding throughout childhood and adolescence. On problem-solving tasks, gender performance was similar in elementary and middle school, but boys and men performed slightly better in problem solving in high school and college. Therefore, this meta-analysis found small instances of gender intensification in computation and problem-solving tasks.

More recently, however, Hyde and colleagues analyzed mathematics performance data drawn from now-mandated assessments in the USA and reported essentially no gender difference in mean mathematics performance across grades 2–11 (Hyde et al. 2008). That is, the small differences noted by Hyde et al. in 1990 were no longer evident. Furthermore, international studies indicate that the magnitude of gender differences varies substantially by the gender equality of nations: The countries with the most gender equality now exhibit no gender differences or gender differences favoring adolescent girls over boys (Else-Quest et al. 2010; Guiso et al. 2008). Thus, it appears that small instances of gender intensification in mathematics performance are lessening over time.

Researchers have devoted considerably less attention to gender differences in verbal ability; however, girls and boys exhibit similarity in verbal skills, and gender differences favoring girls' performance have shrunk over time (Hedges and Nowell 1995; Hyde and Linn 1988). Unlike mathematical performance, there is no evidence of age effects on verbal performance (Hyde and Linn 1988). Therefore, the small gender differences that have been observed in verbal abilities appear to be decreasing over time and do not show a pattern of gender intensification.

Academic Achievement Motivation

Contrary to the gender intensification hypothesis, researchers have found little evidence that adolescent

boys experience increases in their achievement motivation relative to girls. For instance, a longitudinal study of 700 US children's values and perceptions of self-competence in language arts and mathematics across grades 1–12 did not support gender intensification (Jacobs et al. 2002). Girls reported greater value of language arts than boys, but this difference did not change over time. Both girls and boys reported declining perceived competence in language arts. Boys' perceived competence initially decreased more rapidly, enlarging a gender difference during mid-adolescence; however, by high school, this difference had shrunk considerably. For mathematics, boys reported higher perceived competence during first grade, but this gender difference shrank over time, such that there was no gender difference in perceived mathematics competence by high school. Boys and girls reported similar value for mathematics. Therefore, there was evidence of temporary gender intensification in perceived competence in language arts and no evidence of gender intensification in other domains of achievement motivation. In her investigation of 1,323 Australian teenagers, Watt (2004) reported similar findings. Although she reported some evidence for stereotypical gender differences, she found little evidence for gender intensification.

In contrast to these findings, a cross-sectional study by Marsh et al. (2008) found that Australian teenage girls had higher achievement motivation than boys, even in male-dominant subjects such as mathematics and science. This gender difference did not depend on age. Similarly, in a comparison of academic interest in US girls and boys aged 7–18, Dotterer and colleagues found that boys' academic interests declined more rapidly than that of girls', such that by age 13, girls reported more academic interest than boys (Dotterer et al. 2009). Generally, then, research has found little support for the expectation that boys would exhibit higher levels of academic achievement motivation than girls across adolescence.

Evidence Linking Gender Intensification and Mental Health

The gender intensification hypothesis has been used not only to describe and explain adolescent gender differences in identity, attitudes, and behavior, but also to explain changes in psychological well-being and mental health. For instance, research has indicated

that girls are more likely than boys to experience decreases in self-esteem and body satisfaction as they progress through adolescence (e.g., Lindberg et al. 2007; May et al. 2006), and these changes have sometimes been attributed to the gender socialization pressures of adolescence. The most common application of gender intensification to adolescent mental health, however, has been its use in explaining the gender difference in depression. By early adulthood, women are twice as likely to be depressed as are men, and this difference emerges at about ages 13–14 (e.g., Priess et al. 2009). Given the timing of this difference and a large, mostly cross-sectional literature that associates masculinity with psychological well-being and lower levels of depression, gender intensification has been suggested as one reason for the gender difference in depression (e.g., Petersen et al. 1991). However, in a direct test of whether *changes* in gender-role identity predicted *changes* in depression, Priess et al. (2009) did not find evidence that intensification of gender-role identity explained the gender difference in depressive symptoms. Specifically, they found that increases in masculinity predicted lower endorsement of depressive symptoms, but given that girls and boys did not differ in masculine gender-role identity, masculinity could not explain the gender difference in depression. To the extent that girls and boys become more similar in gender-role identity but remain dissimilar in rates of depression, gender intensification does not appear to be a good explanation for the emergence of the gender difference in depression.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One important limitation of existing research on gender intensification is its almost exclusive focus on White adolescents living in intact families in Western culture. Although these adolescents have come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, their experiences represent only some contexts in which gender intensification could be studied as gender development is strongly influenced by both culture and ethnicity (e.g., Shorter-Gooden and Washington 1996). Therefore, inclusion of adolescents who are ethnic minorities, who live in non-Western cultures, and who live in different types of family settings would broaden the understanding of group differences that impact the gendered nature of adolescent development.

On a related note, many of the studies included in this essay noted substantial individual variation in patterns of gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior across adolescence due to adolescents' social interactions, particularly within families and peer groups. Although average patterns of change represent typical adolescent development and are therefore important, individual differences and intra-individual variations in behavior across social contexts reflect additional layers in one's understanding of gender intensification (e.g., Deaux and Major 1987; Leszczynski and Strough 2008). Research that continues to recognize the many contexts in which individuals experience adolescence will help to illustrate the diversity of gender intensification.

The research reviewed in this essay also illustrates that it is important to consider the various domains in which gender development occurs, as the patterns of gender development observed often depended on which domain was being investigated. The findings reviewed here should remind scholars that gender is a multifaceted concept and that the degree to which people appear gender-stereotypical or flexible may depend on the contexts in which they find themselves. Additionally, investigation into the relations between gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior may offer new perspectives on gender intensification (e.g., Signorella and Frieze 2008; Sneed et al. 2006).

Another important direction for future research is to more explicitly study the processes by which adolescents are socialized into traditional gender roles and behaviors. As noted above, Hill and Lynch (1983) were first and foremost interested in socialization processes; however, most of the research they reviewed, and most of the research that has been inspired by their gender intensification hypothesis, concerns itself primarily with gender differences themselves rather than with explanations for these differences. The integration of literatures on gender intensification and theoretical and empirical research concerning gender development may provide a helpful guide. For instance, Bussey and Bandura's (1999) application of social cognitive theory to gender development, with its focus on learning about gender roles through modeling, reinforcements, and punishment, could be used to examine how parents and peers encourage gender conformity, or allow gender flexibility, during adolescence (see McHale et al. 2003).

for another example of this type of approach). This research would enhance the understanding of the processes by which gender differentiation occurs.

Finally, the research reviewed in this essay raises questions regarding the validity of the gender intensification hypothesis. On the one hand, this concept has guided numerous studies of adolescent development and provided a structure on which Hill and Lynch (1983) were able to integrate a sizable body of research. On the other hand, it is unclear whether gender intensification explains adolescent gender differences or merely provides a convenient way to describe those differences. Furthermore, although there is some variation in patterns of gender-role identity, gender-role attitudes, and gendered behavior in adolescence, there seem to be few instances of gender intensification among today's adolescents. It may be the case that adolescence never entailed the marked gender changes once believed, or perhaps adolescent gender development has changed over the past 3 decades. The coming decades of research on gender intensification will no doubt provide further insights about gender development across adolescence and over time.

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Gender Role and Identity

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Overview

Gender roles are an integral part of virtually every culture. Although the exact content of roles for women and men may vary as a function of culture and social class, women's roles virtually always must be compatible with their reproductive role. Children observe and are taught their culture's gender stereotypes and role expectations, and by age 7, have internalized them to achieve a stable gender identity. By young adulthood, this gender identity becomes part of an individual's unique personal identity and may take a variety of different forms.

Becoming Gendered

One of the first pieces of information an expectant or new mother receives is whether her child is a girl or a boy. This information about the baby's biological sex sets in motion a cascade of events imbued with social meaning: e.g., what name to choose, how to

furnish the baby's room, what colors to pick for clothes, and so on. It is through such events that gendered beings are created. This essay examines the nature of gender roles and how these roles become internalized to form an adolescent's gender identity.

Key Definitions

Before examining gender roles and identity, one must understand what these terms mean. When a child is conceived, its biological *sex* typically is established, first by a distinctive chromosomal pattern (XX for girls, XY for boys), then by differential prenatal hormone exposure, and finally by differential genital development. For more than 98% of all babies, all these biological markers are consistent and the baby is labeled either a girl or a boy. A minority of babies, however, are born with inconsistent biological markers (e.g., although its chromosomal pattern is XY, the infant is born with female-looking genitalia). These *intersex* children typically are assigned a sex, and their genitalia may be surgically altered to conform to this assignment (Fausto-Sterling 2000).

The assignment of intersex children to a sex (female or male) highlights the social meaning of biological sex. It is to this social meaning that the term *gender* refers. This social meaning may vary cross-culturally (for example, boys may be expected to be emotional in some cultures, but unemotional in others), but each culture has assumptions about what males and females are like and should do to be considered "typical" men and women, respectively. Thus are *gender roles* defined. The extent to which an individual identifies with these meanings defines that person's *gender identity*.

Although most people consider both sex and gender to be binary categories (male or female; masculine or feminine), the reality is much more complex. Not only is biological sex not a true binary (because of the existence of intersex individuals), but gender is even more differentiated. A biological male can have both strong active-instrumental characteristics (gender-typed as masculine in the USA) as well as strong expressive-nurturant characteristics (gender-typed as feminine in the USA). This combination of stereotypical traits is termed *androgynous*. Regardless of his personality traits or career interests, he may identify as male, or he may identify as female or *transgendered*, in which case he might be seen as having a *gender identity disorder*.

To complicate matters further, several theorists argue that gender is not something individuals "have," but rather something they "do" within a specific social context (Deaux and Stewart 2001). One "performs" gender by how one dresses, moves, and acts, often in different ways at different times with different people. For example, an adolescent girl may dress in sloppy clothes, wear no makeup, yell and act aggressively on the playing field with her teammates during the afternoon, while at night she may wear a dress, heels, and makeup, and act shyly and passively at a coed dance.

In summary, *sex* typically refers to biological distinctions while *gender* refers to socially constructed distinctions. Societies define *gender roles*, the expectations of what boys and girls, men, and women should do. An individual comes to acquire a *gender identity* over time, as part of the developmental process.

Gender Roles

All cultures make distinctions between what adult men and women are expected to do (Basow 1992). This gendered division of labor historically is based on two factors: the subsistence base of the culture, and the biological reality that only women birth children. Thus, whatever tasks are assigned to women must be compatible with child-bearing and nursing. In hunting and gathering societies, gathering nuts and berries was compatible with these reproductive activities and were assigned to women; hunting, which required following prey for long periods of time, often at considerable distance from home base, was not. Such tasks were assigned to men. In agricultural societies, tending to small plots near home while also attending to domestic chores (cooking, cleaning, sewing) was compatible with female reproductive activities; tending to larger plots further from home, participating in many community activities, was not.

Although evolutionary psychologists posit that innate gender differences in personality traits uniquely equip women to excel at domestic and nurturant activities, and men to excel at aggressive and leadership activities, social constructionists posit that the causal relationship may actually go in the reverse direction. Eagly's (1987) *social role theory* argues that it is *because* women are expected to care for very young children, and men are expected to be the primary breadwinner in the family, that girls and boys may be taught to acquire

the gender-appropriate skills. When women are in leadership positions, or when men are in positions requiring nurturance, each gender not only develops those skills, but is perceived as possessing them as well. Thus, executive women are assumed to be dominant, competitive, and assertive, while male nursery school teachers are assumed to be nurturant and caring. In other words, gender-differentiated adult roles may create gender differences in traits and behaviors, rather than gender differences in traits and behaviors creating gender-differentiated adult roles.

There is little evidence supporting the idea that males and females innately differ with respect to a wide range of human traits and behaviors (Hyde 2005). Individual differences vastly outweigh gender differences in magnitude. That is, there is more variability in traits and behaviors among boys, as a group, and among girls, as a group, than there is between boys and girls. Gender differences that do exist (such as boys being more physically aggressive, girls being more verbal and sensitive to nonverbal cues) typically are small, dependent upon situational and/or social cues for detection, and develop over time.

Despite strong evidence of gender similarities, most cultures believe in gender differences and utilize *gender stereotypes* in the socialization of children and portrayal of individuals in the media. Every socializing aspect of a culture contributes to conveying the message about distinctive gender roles. In these ways, children learn the gender role matched to their biological sex.

Gender stereotypes in the USA portray men as possessing active-instrumental traits, such as competitiveness and dominance, and women as possessing nurturant-expressive traits, such as sensitivity and compassion (Gerber 2009). Men also are presumed to excel at math, science, and mechanical activities; women at verbal and nurturing activities. Men are expected to be the primary income producers in a family; women are expected to be the primary caretakers in a family. Furthermore, status is an integral component of gender stereotypes and roles: the qualities associated with men have higher status and are viewed as more powerful than the qualities associated with women.

The content of gender stereotypes and roles varies somewhat across cultures and time. For example, associating the female gender role exclusively with

nurturant-expressive traits is more typical of college students in the 1970s than the 1990s, and among White rather than Black Americans (Basow 2006; Twenge 2009). Current gender stereotypes for women, especially African—American women, typically include both nurturant-expressive traits as well as the more active-instrumental ones. Gendered expectations of men, however, still emphasize the latter traits only.

Children start learning cultural gender stereotypes and their gender role as soon as they are born. Much research has shown that parents perceive their newborn sons and daughters differently and consequently start treating them differently, often in subtle ways (Basow 2006). For example, parents of newborn sons tend to see their infant as sturdier and more active than parents of newborn daughters, even though observers who do not know the child's sex perceive no differences. A girl child also tends to be handled more gently and talked to more than is a boy child.

With the acquisition of language skills during the second year of life comes a very powerful source of information about how girls and boys, women and men, should behave. Bussey and Bandura (1999) describe three sources of information about gender and gender roles: direct instruction (what children are told about what girls/women should do, wear, etc.); modeling (what significant people transmit by their own behavior regarding gender-related values, attitudes, and actions); and experience (what consequences follow a child's performance of gender-linked behavior). For example, a boy might be told directly that it is important for boys to be competitive and to win; he might see males on television being dominant and aggressive; and he might be praised when he wins a playground fight and ridiculed when he loses. Thus, children learn what is expected of them by virtue of being either female or male.

In the USA, the male gender role is more rigid than the female gender role (Basow 2006). Girls and women, although still expected to develop and enact nurturing and expressive behaviors, are often encouraged to develop active and instrumental behaviors as well. Girls can be "girly girls," performing traditional feminine behaviors, but they also can be athletic and achievement oriented. In terms of appearance, they can have long or short hair, and wear dresses or pants. Boys, on the other hand, have little leeway in the way

they perform masculinity, especially in terms of appearance and behaviors. Even as toddlers, they are expected to be strong, unemotional, athletic, and active. Whereas girls can demonstrate interest and engage in traditionally male activities, boys are discouraged from doing anything even vaguely associated with females, such as wear the color pink or play with dolls. This role rigidity is particularly marked for European American boys.

With puberty come more adult expectations of both girls and boys. Adolescent boys are expected to prepare to earn a good income; adolescent girls are expected to prepare for attracting a mate. Although job preparation has become increasingly important for girls of all race/ethnicities, career development is often viewed as a secondary focus, and the choice of career often evaluated as to its compatibility with future childcare activities. The increasing sexual objectification of girls as their bodies mature often makes adolescence a particularly trying time for girls, as indicated by the increasing rates of female depression and eating disorders at that time (Basow 2006).

The role of the media in representing and encouraging stereotyped gender roles has long been noted, especially because children and adolescents are prime consumers of these messages (Basow 1992). Increasing exposure to media messages and models has been linked with increasing internalization of what is portrayed. Thus are traditional gender roles conveyed. Of recent concern is the increasing sexual objectification of girls and women in virtually all media outlets: books, television, films, video games, advertising, and music (American Psychological Association 2007). This pattern of portraying girls and women as objects of sexual value rather than as autonomous human beings with complex needs, talents, and interests has been linked to self-objectification in teenage girls, which in turns leads to poorer body image, increased incidence of disordered eating, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased confidence in one's math ability (Grabe and Hyde 2009).

Gender Identity

Children develop their gender identity over time as part of their developing sense of self. Given the consistent gender labeling and gender socialization experiences to which they are exposed, this process starts at birth.

During the first 2 years of life, infants and toddlers are continuously exposed to gender labeling and gender messages; e.g., "what a strong *boy*!" "what a cute *girl*!"; "big *boys* don't cry!" "*girls* don't yell." Not surprisingly, then, children can distinguish between males and females during their first year of life (Basow 2006; Bussey and Bandura 1999). With the development of language skills during the second year of life, children start using gender labels to guide their own behavioral choices, such as for gender-appropriate toys. These associations are learned through direct instruction, reactions from others, and through observation. By age 4, children show disapproval of cross-gender play, such as a boy playing with a doll or a girl playing with a truck.

Language skills also herald labeling oneself as either a girl or a boy, the beginning of gender identity (Basow 2006). Because young children's thinking is very concrete during the first 5 years of life, children associate gender with visible things, such as clothes or games. Thus, a child might label another child with long hair as a girl, regardless of being told that the child is a boy. Children before age 5 do not yet understand that gender is something permanent about an individual and directly connected to a particular adult reproductive role. For example, a 4-year-old boy might think that he could grow up to be a mommy.

Once children move beyond concrete thinking and understand the constancy of gender (which occurs between ages 5 and 7), children display stronger gender identification and make even greater attempts at gender conformity. Basow (2006) describes a number of different theoretical accounts of this process of gender identity development. Psychodynamic theorists, such as Freud and Chodorow, emphasize the importance of identifying with the same-sex parent, which occurs through complex and unconscious processes. In contrast, most current theories emphasize the important role played by cognitive processes. Whether it is the recognition that gender is a fixed aspect of one's identity (Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory), or the development of a gender schema that helps sort incoming information according to its gender appropriateness (Bem's gender schema theory), children use their understanding of gender to categorize themselves and others. Perhaps the most detailed theory of gender identity development is Bussey and Bandura's (1999)

social cognitive theory which posits that gender identity develops as a result of the reciprocal interaction among three factors: personal (e.g., gender-linked conceptions), behavioral (e.g., gender-linked activity patterns), and environmental (e.g., social reactions to behavior).

During the time gender constancy develops (ages 5–7), children are particularly rigid regarding gendered behavior. It is not uncommon for a 6-year-old girl to insist on wearing dresses, even if her mother never wears dresses and prefers her to wear pants, because “girls wear dresses.” Once gender constancy exists and gender identification has occurred, children tend to look even more attentively at what same-sex models are doing and to associate primarily with same-sex others. It’s as if a child says to himself, “well, now that I’m a boy for life, let me take seriously what it is that boys do.” Playing with other members of one’s sex predominates during childhood, and different play, communication, and social patterns typically result (Basow 2006).

For girls, the development of gender identity proceeds relatively smoothly after age 7, at least until puberty (Basow 2006). Perhaps, because the female gender role is relatively flexible, or because girls tend to be surrounded by diverse adult female role models (mother and other female caretakers, teachers), girls can engage in a range of behaviors and not have their “femininity” questioned. Boys, on the other hand, perhaps because their gender role is so narrowly circumscribed, or because they may not have a personal connection to male role models, are routinely scrutinized and evaluated for their performance of “masculinity.” The result is that boys more often than girls engage in behaviors, especially aggressive and risk-taking ones, to “prove” their masculinity.

At puberty, as bodies take on more adult forms, a process of gender intensification occurs (Basow 2006). Gender identity now must incorporate sexual feelings and preparation for adult family and career goals. Given the different gender roles expected of women and men, it is not surprising that many girls become more oriented toward interpersonal goals, especially attracting a mate, and become less career oriented than boys. As noted previously, adolescence often represents a narrowing of options for girls and increased sexual and self-objectification. Girls may

focus on “proving” their femininity through sexualized appearance and behaviors meant to attract young (and often older) men. Boys, too, may try to “prove” their masculinity through sexual behaviors as well as through aggressive and risk-taking behaviors. Race/ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation may all modify the precise form such gender intensification takes, but the process appears to occur for most young adolescents.

By late adolescence, both girls and boys become more confident of their gender identity as they focus on developing a more comprehensive and nuanced individual identity. Strict conformity to stereotyped gender roles is less required and less performed, especially for women (Basow 2006). That is, a woman who engages in a nontraditional occupation or behaviors, or who possesses nonstereotypic traits is no more likely to question her gender identity than a more stereotypic woman. In fact, gender identity continues to expand and shift as individuals assume the different life roles of worker, wife/husband, mother/father, and so on (Deaux and Stewart 2001). As noted previously, adult roles tend to shape how gender is performed such that anyone in leadership roles becomes more assertive and dominant, and anyone who cares for young children actually becomes more nurturant and empathic. Thus, gender identity, as part of one’s personal identity, continues to grow and expand throughout the lifecycle.

Concluding Comments

Gender roles are an integral part of virtually every culture, although their exact content may vary depending upon the subsistence base of the society. Because of women’s reproductive role, the female gender role is typically constructed to be compatible with childbearing and early childcare activities. The fact that women have more control over their reproductive activities and longer life expectancy than in the past has led to multiple options in the way the female gender role can be performed; for example, homemaker or career woman. The male gender role still tends to be more narrowly focused on dominance and achievement, but some variations in the performance of the male gender role occur. By age 7, children internalize their culture’s gender expectations and develop a relatively stable gender identity. During adolescence, this gender identity may become more flexible and

nuanced as teenagers develop their own unique personal identity.

Most of the research on gender roles and gender identity has focused on heterosexual European Americans. Although the process by which an individual develops his or her gender identity is likely similar across different race, ethnicities, and sexualities, more direct study of underrepresented groups is needed (Basow 2006). Furthermore, how gender identity is measured may also need to be explored further. Currently, most researchers use self-rated personality traits, which may or may not capture the complexity of identity. The content of gender roles themselves does appear to vary somewhat across groups, although the agency/communion (male/female, respectively) dichotomy is common. More attention needs to be paid to the way gender roles and identities vary across situations and the life cycle.

Cross-References

► Gender Identity

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Gender Role Conflict: Boyhood in Distress

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Boy's emotional welfare has recently come into focus within academic circles and popular media as a matter of serious importance (Brown and et al. 2009; Garbarino 2000; Horne and Kiselica 1999; Kiselica 2008; Kiselica et al. 2007; Pollack 1998). Media attention chronicles school shootings, gang violence, and chronic underachievement, all seemingly connected to the plight of wayward boys. Cultural lore attributes their dangerous and self-defeating behaviors, at least in part, to “being male.” Following that line of thought, there is also a concern about how dominant contemporary models of masculinity may impact even “normal” boys. Boys may assume a number of masculine personas, all arguable offshoots or reactions to what is held as traditional masculinity (Brown and et al. 2009). Some young males assume the “cool poise” or the “gangsta” persona attempting to seem bullet proof and impervious to various social, familial, and psychological strains. Others have adopted a “slacker” position argued by some to be a psychological defense against the impact of failure. If one does not really apply oneself, there is less of a sting when academic, vocational, or relational accomplishments never materialize. Regardless, of the brand of masculine ideology, boys and masculinity are an important topic for discussion.

Reviews of statistics data from reliable national sources documents the problems of growing up male in America (O'Neil in press; O'Neil and Lujan 2009). Consider the following statistical facts about young boys: (a) 35% of 15–17-year-old boys are below the grade common for their age, (b) boys are three times more likely to be enrolled in a special education class than the typical girl, (c) 71% of school suspensions are with boys, (d) 14% of 18–24-year-olds are high school dropouts, (e) 37% of 12th grade boys score below basic levels on standardized writing tests, (f) five times as

many 15–24-year-old boys commit suicide compared to girls, (g) 16% of school age boys have been diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder, (h) 12% of high school boys report being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and (i) 95% of state and federal prisoners under the age of 25 are male. These are known data and do not reflect the unreported problems boys have. These data suggest that not every boy is in personal crises, but many boys face significant problems during the first 20 years of life.

There is a growing acceptance among researchers and theorists that aspects of traditional male socialization may significantly contribute to these problems. Most boys are socialized to assume normative but sometimes unhealthy gender roles. David and Brannon (1976) were among the first to argue that boys are encouraged to be stoic, strive for power (often over others), and obtain positions of status. David and Brannon (1976) suggested that boys are told above all else, avoid “sissy stuff” or behaviors that may be construed as feminine. In a similar way, Pollack (1998) suggested that the “boy code” stresses many of the traditional aspects of male ideology including emotional constriction and a go-it-alone attitude. Pollack argued that these gender role norms can be harmful, resulting in boys being emotionally stunted or damaged by attempting to emulate them or impose these strict roles upon others. Kiselica et al. (2007) offered clinical interventions for boys while accounting for gender-specific stereotypes and the harm that may be done when boys are asked to assume them. This essay reviews the gender role conflict paradigm as one potential lens through which researchers and clinicians may understand boys and their struggles with masculinity.

Gender Role Conflict

One may understand many of the types of masculine conflicts boys face through the gender role conflict paradigm developed by O’Neil et al. (1986). Gender role conflict (GRC) is defined as a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences for the person or others. GRC occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self (O’Neil et al. 1995). The ultimate outcome of GRC is the restriction of a person’s human potential or the restriction of another person’s potential. GRC is operationally defined by four psychological domains, numerous

situational contexts, and three personal experiences. The domains, contexts, and experience of GRC represent the complexity of GRC in people’s lives and are defined in earlier publications (O’Neil and et al. 1995; O’Neil 2008).

While this paradigm was initially developed to account for the strains adult males experience, recently it has been adapted for boys as well (Blazina and et al. 2005). In the gender role conflict model (see O’Neil 2008), males of all ages often feel pressured to assume skewed notions of traditional forms of masculinity. Traditional masculinity found in the United States, often places an emphasis upon achieving status, power, and restricting one’s range of emotions. The extreme versions of this masculine ideology involve rigidity related to how one perceives the stereotypes associated with being male. The result of this rigid stance, allow little room for a relational stance with others, place a premium upon achieving power or status by controlling others, and make certain emotions off limits. To this end, thoughts and behaviors that place one at risk of being vulnerable are seen as taboo within the boy’s psychological repertoire. When gender roles are approached in this inflexible fashion, they become a template for intrapsychic and interpersonal difficulties. When one fails to live up to these prescriptive gender role notions, various forms of conflict may occur. Males may experience shame and anxiety in regard to not being man enough. One may also experience cultural sanctions for violation of widely accepted gender norms (O’Neil et al. 1995). This might include loss of status, ridicule from others, and pressure to reconfirm those traditional gender roles as ideal. However, as Pleck (1981) noted in his seminal work *The Myth of Masculinity*, even when one is able to achieve some of the requirements of skewed traditional masculinity it may be done so at the detriment of the individual. There is a social and psychological strain related to gender roles that ask the male to live in the extremes. Whether one fails or succeeds in terms of achievement of idealized male norms, the ultimate outcome of gender role conflict for males is the restriction of their human potential (O’Neil et al. 1986).

O’Neil et al. (1986) initially identified six patterns of gender role conflict: restricted emotionality, socialized impulses of control, power and competition, homophobia, restricted sexual and affectionate behavior, obsession with success and achievement, and health-care problems. Eventually, these patterns were

operationalized through factor analysis into four subscales that constitute the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O'Neil et al. 1986). *Restricted emotionality* reflects the degree men are cautious in the overt expression of various tender emotions and feelings. *Restricted affectionate behavior between men* involves the difficulties expressing affection for same sex persons, perceived to be based in homophobia. *Success, power, and competition* entail the focus on personal achievement and individual success that often empathizes accumulation of power or control over others in skewed ways. Finally, *conflict between work and family* relationships emphasizes the degree to which one may experience difficulties balancing work and family roles and obligations. The various forms of gender role conflict have been consistently linked to higher levels of psychological distress for college and adult men including depression, anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, marital satisfaction, negative toward women and minorities, and interpersonal and sexual violence toward women (O'Neil 2008).

Fear of the Feminine (FOF)

It has been theorized within O'Neil's gender role conflict paradigm that the deeper psychological constructs involve the Masculine Mystique and Value System (O'Neil 1981, 1982). This is a set of complex ideal masculine values that males are socialized to accept, even though, ultimately, they are based on rigid masculine stereotypes and are likely responsible for creating males' fear of the feminine (O'Neil et al. 1986). Men's fear of the feminine is a key concept in the GRC paradigm. It has also been of interest since the early days of psychotherapy and has been identified as a core aspect in men's studies, being found in various disciplines. The FOF has been discussed in various analytical schools of psychotherapy (Cook 2006; Maguire 2004). Freud (1937) suggested that psychological bedrock had been reached in analysis when men could confront their fears of losing power (i.e., castration anxiety) oftentimes brought upon in their relationships with women. Horney (1932) discussed men's "dread of women" and how this fear left men's sense of masculinity on unstable ground. Jung (1957) noted the importance of the feminine in his conceptualization of healthy and unhealthy notions of masculinity. FOF is also noted on a more sociocultural level, affecting gender roles issues for both men and women (Blazina 1997, 2003).

The FOF heightens the awareness and adherence to gender normative behaviors, which can result in a range of uncomfortable experiences for men such as helplessness, vulnerability, dependency, loneliness, lack of personal influence, lack of certainty, etc. (Kierski and Blazina 2009). These are all reactions that stereotypically are not associated with traditional maleness. One may gauge a male's "appropriate" behavior based upon avoiding all things in thought, word, or deed considered feminine, and by extension thought to belong to the world of women. Kierski and Blazina (2009) suggested that FOF maybe conceptualized as a censor, preventing men from infringing on prescribed gender boundaries. In addition, FOF may also be the impetus for using psychological defenses to distance oneself from thoughts and behaviors perceived as not masculine. O'Neil et al.'s (1986) widely used Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) is theoretically built upon the fear of the feminine and is believed to be in part responsible for producing psychological strain for males.

Gender Role Conflict in Boys: The (GRCS-A)

While the O'Neil et al. (1986) Gender Role Conflict paradigm has been widely researched with adult males (see O'Neil 2008), it has been hypothesized that similar gender-specific conflicts and pressures may be encountered by boys (Blazina et al. 2005). It was suggested that boys begin to take normative steps in forming a personal male ideology or sense of masculinity in adolescence, if not younger. When this process is derailed by pressures to assume normative but sometimes unhealthy aspects of masculinity and/or false ones that are not consistent with the boy's personal genuine psychological footprint, it can lead to gender role conflict. A boy's notion of masculinity may be influenced heavily by societal, familial, school, peers, and individual (intrapsychic) and interpersonal forces.

Blazina et al. (2005) implemented research on the Gender Role Conflict Scale: Adolescent Version (GRCS-A) which was adapted from the adult measure developed by O'Neil et al. (1986). The research goals were to (a) adapt the GRCS measure for use with adolescents, (b) examine the psychometric properties of the adapted measure, (i.e., the Gender Role Conflict Scale-Adolescent version (GRCS-A), and (c) correlate the GRCS-A with psychological distress. After reviewing the items of the original Gender Role

Conflict Scale (GRCS; O'Neil et al. 1986), Blazina et al. (2005) adapted items so as to be developmentally appropriate for an adolescent population, yet theoretically consistent with the items' original construct. As expected, the factor analysis structure of the GRCS-A was largely similar to the original measure GRCS in that four factors were identified. The Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS-A) has four subscales including Restricted Affection Between Men (RABM), Restricted Emotionality (RE), Conflict Between Work, School, and Family (CBWSF), and Need for Success and Achievement (NSA). Although the GRCS-A was largely consistent with the adult measure from which it was adapted, there were notable differences. For instance, six power/competition items from the adult Success, Power, and Competition subscale were not retained in the adolescent adaptation. The absence of those items (which stress having power over others) resulted in an adolescent factor, which seems to be more representative of a "need for success and achievement." The resulting "Need for Success and Achievement" subscale was the only factor not associated with negative mental health indicators. These results may suggest that this subscale is more reflective of the positive or desired aspects of masculine ideology, rather than measuring gender role conflict.

GRCS-A and Psychological Distress

The results from the Blazina et al.'s (2005) study suggested that the GRCS-A was a psychometrically robust instrument, which positively correlated with self-reports of psychological distress, as measured by the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale.

Other research has investigated the GRCS-A's relationship with psychological strain for boys. Five studies with adolescent boys have been completed using the GRCS-A. The gender role factors of RE, RABM, and CBWSF have significantly predicted boys' family stress and problems with conduct, anger, and emotions (Cadenhead and Huzirec 2002; Blazina et al. 2005, 2007; Soublis 2003; Watts and Borders 2005). Cadenhead and Huzirec (2002) used canonical correlations with a clinical sample of troubled boys and found that family problems, emotional problems, and anger problems were significantly associated with RE and the need for success and achievement.

In one of the only qualitative studies, research has shown that adolescent boys report all four GRC patterns and that GRC is a developmental process started in adolescence (Watts and Borders 2005). Eleven high school students were interviewed about issues related to the four subscales of the GRCS-A. Both individual and group interviews were used with the students. Interviewees were asked questions like "How important is it to be successful? Do you try to be more successful than other guys?", "Is it hard for guys to express their emotions to each other?", and "It seems that it is sometimes hard for guys to express their feelings. Do you think this is true?" The results indicated that the students feel pressure (a) to avoid showing their emotions and affection toward other boys and (b) to be better than other boys in a variety of areas. The boys expressed conflict about having feelings and ways to express these emotions. Some boys denied having feelings at all. The researchers also found that older boys reported more conflict between school, social, and family obligations.

Three patterns of the adult gender role conflict (RE, RABM, CBWSF) appear to be relevant to adolescent boys' experience. The Success, Power, and Competition pattern for adult men was not empirically derived with adolescent samples. What was derived for boys was the need for success and achievement as a potential conflict area. This result may suggest that age and developmental stage may affect views about success, power, achievement, and competition. More research needs to be completed, but the initial findings indicate that GRC is related to adolescent boys' emotional and familial experiences.

Summary

The psychology of men is in the early stages of theorizing about boys and assessing their experiences with their masculinity. Little is known about how boy's gender role socialization contributes to their emotional, psychological, academic, and interpersonal problems. Even with only limited theory and research on boys, enough is known to begin to develop programs for boys in schools and the larger community. A "call to action" to help boys in schools has been made (O'Neil and Lujan 2009) and there is a need for curricular materials to educate boys on how gender role conflict can be hazardous to emotional and psychological health.

One way to mediate resistance and defensiveness about boys' gender role conflict is to emphasize the positive and healthy aspects of masculinity. Ideas about affirming boys, men, and positive masculinity are emerging (Kiselica 2010; Kiselica et al. 2008; Kiselica and Englar-Carlson 2010; O'Neil and Lujan 2009). Paradigms of positive masculinity are needed to describe boys' strengths when transcending sexist stereotypes. Patterns of positive masculinity can help boys learn alternatives to sexist attitudes and behaviors that cause gender role conflict. Programming could emphasize what constitutes "healthy masculinity." Male strengths and potentialities could focus on themes such as responsibility, courage, altruism, resiliency, service, protection of others, social justice, positive fathering, perseverance, generativity, and nonviolent problem solving. Positive masculinity moves away from what is wrong with boys and men to identify the qualities that empower males to improve themselves and society.

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Gendered Juvenile Justice

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Overview

Although the juvenile justice system continues to be dominated by boys, the number of girls entering the system is steadily increasing. Girls are the fastest growing population in the juvenile system. Historically, research only focused on male delinquency; however, recent research has started to explore the reasons why girls engage in delinquent behavior. The pathways to delinquency differ for girls, and since the inception of the juvenile court, the juvenile justice system has treated boys and girls differently. The juvenile court's response to female delinquency was often based on gender stereotypes and expectations of moral conduct. Recently, it is suggested that girls require gender-specific prevention programs to address their distinct pathways and unique needs.

Populations Generally Studied/ Sources of Data

Gender is the strongest predictor of crime and delinquency. Males unequivocally are involved in a majority of crime, and the male crime rate universally exceeds that of females (Hagan 1990). As a result, the juvenile justice system is primarily dominated by boys; however, the past decade has witnessed a significant increase in the number of girls entering the system (Sharp and Simon 2004). Girls are the fastest growing population in the juvenile justice system (Snyder and Sickmund 1999). In 1980, they accounted for 20% of all juvenile arrests

(Snyder and Sickmund 2006). In 2008, girls were involved in 30% of arrests (Puzzanchera 2009). In 2008, the arrest rate for boys was only 4% more than it was in 1980; yet for the same year, the arrest rate for girls was 80% higher than the 1980 level (Puzzanchera 2009). Although arrests of juveniles decreased 2.8% from 2007 to 2008, the arrest rate for juvenile girls increased. The arrest rate for girls decreased less than that of boys in most offense categories, such as aggravated assault and burglary, but in some categories, such as simple assault, larceny-theft, and DUI, girls' arrests actually increased while boys' arrests decreased (Puzzanchera 2009).

While the numbers continue to increase, female delinquency has not been considered a serious problem until recently. Most conventional research all but ignored the issue of gender as a variable in analysis (Chesney-Lind 1989; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Schaffner 2006). Traditional research was undertaken by male researchers who studied male populations and used male theories to explain male delinquency. Yet little attention was devoted to girls and female delinquency (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004). When girls were included in the research, the focus tended to center around antiquated notions about gender roles. This research used socially contrived stereotypes of masculinity and femininity to explain girls' misbehaviors (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Schaffner 2006). Research has shown that decisions concerning girls reflect concerns about their sexuality and independence (in the form of parental disobedience). Therefore, it is important to take a closer look of the history of the treatment of girls throughout the juvenile justice system and explore the influence genders plays in the justice system.

Controversies: Gendered Justice

History

The first juvenile court was established in 1899 in Cook County, Illinois, against a backdrop of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. At this time, as in recent times, a greater number of boys than girls appeared before the court; however, the number of girls referred to the court increased in the early twentieth century (Tanenhaus 2004). The offenses that brought girls into the juvenile court reflect the Victorian fear of sexuality and the nineteenth-century dicta of

a “good girl.” A majority of girls who were referred to the court were charged with sexual offenses. Nearly 80% of the girls brought to juvenile court were charged with immorality (Tanenhaus 2004). At this time, sexuality overshadowed the issue of female delinquency and girls often were charged with moral rather than criminal offenses (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004; Odem and Schlossman 1991). Girls were charged with indiscrete activities such as riding in a closed automobile, loitering in a department store, inhabiting a furnished room with a young man, or even shimmying on a roadhouse dance floor (Abrams and Curran 2000; Knupfer 2001).

In keeping with Progressive Era efforts to “fix” society, the juvenile justice system worked to remedy the problem of disobedient girls. The juvenile court adopted a paternalistic role that sought to protect girls who were in danger of becoming morally depraved; and juvenile court judges feared that sexually promiscuous girls would become “lost women” (Odem 1995). Many of the charges that led young girls to placement in Industrial schools included disobedience, stubbornness, and leading idle and vicious lives (Rosenberg and Paine 1973).

The court treated female youth and male youth differently and the differential treatment of girls and boys was based on certain myths and misconceptions about girls’ delinquent behavior. Conflicting practices viewed girls as more vulnerable than boys and in need of care, but at the same time, they were seen as more wicked than boys (Gelstrophe and Worrallfar 2009). Girls were held to a higher moral standard of conduct and “wayward” girls often were placed in residential settings to protect them and prepare them for their roles as wives and mothers (Odem 1995). The residential placements were intended to train the girls in feminine skills and hold them until the age of marriage (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004). Between 1899 and 1909, the Chicago family court sent half of the female juvenile delinquents to reformatories, but only sent one fifth of the male juvenile delinquents to reformatories (MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2001). Similarly, girls were twice as likely as boys to be detained for their offenses and were held five times longer in detention than delinquent boys, since boys were eligible for probation and girls were not (MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2001). Girls were incarcerated for their own good, and even when they committed the same crime as boys,

the court judged them in terms of their moral welfare, not their delinquent behavior (Abrams and Curran 2000; Boritch 1992). The juvenile court used incarceration to keep girls safe and “pure.”

The original delinquent girls in Chicago were poor and working class girls of immigrant and African-American migrant families (Knupfer 2001). In the early years of the juvenile justice system, issues such as delayed hearings, untrained probation and parole staff, and overcrowded reform institutions affected the dominion of the court (Knupfer 2001; Tanenhaus 2004). These issues were especially distressing to minority girls. Black girls were particularly affected by overcrowded courts and delayed case processing because they were only allowed to be sent to one institution. The State Training School for Girls at Geneva was the only school to accept minority girls, and it only accepted a few girls at a time (Tanenhaus 2004). When the school was full, girls were held in the Juvenile Detention Home until spaces became available at the school, a process that could take up to 6 months (Tanenhaus 2004). As a result, Black girls in the 1920s experienced longer periods of incarceration than their White counterparts (Tanenhaus 2004).

Contemporary Trends

By the midcentury, there were significant developments in responses to youth who were considered “at risk” of delinquency. The aim at this time was treatment rather than punishment (Gelstrophe and Worrallfar 2009). Yet the “sexualization” of girls continued and the moral scrutiny often resulted in arrested girls being subjected to vaginal exams and pregnancy test (Cox 2003). Despite the evidence of historical bias, more than 20 years of empirical study has yielded conflicting results as to whether gender bias exists in the juvenile justice system. Some research suggests that girls receive lighter sentences than boys; other studies reveal the contrary, harsher ones. These inconsistent findings have led to debate about whether the system is more lenient with girls or more punitive with them because they are deemed in need of protection (Cauffman 2008). Earlier research found evidence of gender bias in the system when legal factors such as offense type and offense severity were taken into account (Staples 1984), and other research has found no evidence to suggest gender bias in the juvenile justice system (Dannefer and Schutt 1982).

The differential treatment that male and female delinquents receive from the justice system has been referred to as “paternalistic justice” (Chesney-Lind 2006). This notion implies that girls who conduct themselves in ways that are appropriate of the traditional female roles of purity and submission receive preferential treatment and more lenient sentences. Leiber and Mack (2003) suggest that, “. . . decision makers treat females more leniently because they have been socialized to protect females, or they have stereotypical beliefs that females do not engage in criminal behavior” (p. 59). As a result, some research found that female youth are less likely to be detained, prosecuted, convicted, or sentenced to incarceration (Poe Yamagata and Butts 1996). Conversely, girls who violate these stereotypes may receive more severe treatment (Chesney-Lind 1977). For example, empirical studies of the processing of girls’ and boys’ cases between 1950 and the early 1970s found that girls who were charged with status offenses were treated more harshly than boys and girls who were charged with criminal offenses (Chesney-Lind 1973; Odem and Schlossman 1991). A study conducted by Tielmann and Landry (1981) revealed that girls were less likely than boys to be incarcerated for committing a delinquent offense. Yet, girls who were arrested and detained for delinquent offenses were detained longer than boys; and girls were detained longer than boys for runaway offenses and delinquent offenses.

Similarly, Johnson and Scheuble (1991) examined gender bias in the juvenile courts and found that girls were less likely than boys to receive probation or to be incarcerated, and girls were more likely than boys to have their cases dismissed. Overall, Johnson and Scheuble (1991) found support for the chivalry effect for less serious offenses and that “sex role traditionalism has its strongest effect when girls commit more serious offenses since they would be the most inconsistent with gender role expectations” (p. 694).

Conversely, it also has been argued that the juvenile justice system’s processing of girls illustrates that they are still being punished, not for harm done to society, but because they have violated stereotypical norms of femininity (Chesney-Lind 1974). For example, Mallicoat (2007) examined the effect that gender has on juvenile offender processing and found that probation officers continue to concern themselves with child saving techniques, and as a result, girls are punished for

their sexuality. Mallicoat found that girls “were described as engaging in sex-related behavior of moral question. . .” By contrast, “the nature of boy’s sexuality was not described unless they were engaging in criminal sexual activity” (Mallicoat, p. 25).

The notion that girls are punished for deviating from socially accepted gender-appropriate behavior is evident by the greater number of girls who are referred to the juvenile justice system for status offenses. Status offenses are offenses that are considered criminal only when the offender is a minor, such as truancy, violating curfew laws, running away from home, smoking, and underage drinking. Early research contends that, once referred, female status offenders were more likely than male offenders to be petitioned for formal court processing, placed in pre-adjudicatory detention, and incarcerated (Chesney-Lind 1973, 1977; Sheldon 1981). Compared to their male counterparts, female status offenders received especially harsh treatment (Bishop and Frazier 1992). Carr et al. (2008) analyzed 587 cases of delinquent youth Alabama and found that the girls in the sample had committed less serious offenses, which led to their placement in a residential treatment program. Specifically, nearly a quarter of the girls had a status offense as their most serious offense while only 2% of the boys had only a status offense.

Overall, the research is mixed and yields inconsistent results as to the presence or absence of gender bias in the courts. Some studies continue to support the conclusion that girls receive more lenient treatment (Poe-Yamagata and Butts 1996), while others find that girls are subjected to harsher punishment (Gaarder and Belknap 2002). The discrepancies appear to lie in mixed methodologies, samples, and the presence of masking variables, which all speak to the need for further research and require a closer look at girls in the juvenile justice system.

Pathways

Typically, girls and boys involved in the juvenile justice system have many common risk factors. As with delinquent boys, delinquent girls are likely to be a member of a minority group, to be economically disadvantaged and come from dysfunctional families that reside in high crime neighborhoods, to have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse, to be easily influenced by peer pressure, and have difficulties in school (Acoca and Dedel 1998). However, there are several dissimilarities

as well. Female delinquents are more likely to be younger than male delinquents. Female juvenile delinquents are also more likely to have run away from home, to have been arrested for a status offense, have mental health issues, and to have attempted suicide (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998).

Female delinquents have unique underlying causes for their delinquency, such as abuse, victimization, and exploitation (Chesney-Lind 2006; Lennings et al. 2007). Approximately 70% of girls who enter juvenile institutions report being victims of abuse (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004). Additionally, girls who have suffered from sexual abuse are more likely than males to abuse and sell drugs and to commit general delinquency. It is estimated that girls who are victims of physical and/or sexual abuse are twice as likely as girls who have not been victimized to engage in delinquency (Widom 1992). Abuse is a stronger predictor for offending behavior in females than in males (Maxfield and Widom 1996; Makarios 2007). Female juvenile offenders have not only experienced higher rates of victimization than male delinquents, but they also tend to lack protective factors and coping mechanisms (such as positive interpersonal relationships with caring adults, school connectedness, and religiosity) to help overcome the trauma (Cauffman 2008; Zahn et al. 2008).

Despite the growing numbers of girls involved in the juvenile justice system, female juvenile delinquents remain largely marginalized by a majority of researchers. This has often been referred to as the “Tyranny of Small Numbers” (Tracy et al. 2009). The justification for the exclusion of girls is that the data are too few for gender-specific analysis (Tracy et al. 2009). However, with these small numbers come in-depth retrospective interviews, which provide a detailed account of the lives of the girls and their pathways to offending. These interviews give a clearer picture and understanding of the unique needs of delinquent girls.

Measures and Measurement Issues

Arrest Trends

As previously mentioned, the arrest rate for girls is increasing. Although girls were most likely to enter the juvenile justice system for status offenses and be targeted for morality instead of criminal offenses, arrest trends are shifting as girls begin to enter the system “for

traditionally ‘masculine’ violations” (Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2006, p. 276). However, there is no evidence that girls are more violent today than they were a century ago. The increase in arrest might be related to policy revisions rather than an increase in female juvenile violence (Zahn et al. 2008).

In a Girls Study Group Bulletin from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Margaret Zahn (2008) and her colleagues postulate that other factors may account for the increase in the rate of assault arrests for girls. They surmise, “Because arrests for assault increased without corresponding increases in arrests for homicide or robbery, these analysts attribute the increases in assault arrests to changes in law enforcement policies, such as responses to domestic violence, rather than to actual increases in assaults” (p. 6). First, it is suggested that law enforcement policies have lowered the threshold for reporting an assault or for classifying an assault as aggravated. These increased reporting may actually create the appearance of more violent behaviors and actions. Additionally, mandatory arrest laws for domestic violence might account for some of the rise in girls arrested for assault, while having no affect on other violent crimes. Girls who were once arrested for incorrigibility or ungovernably (status offenses) may be arrested for simple assaults in domestic situations. Some research indicates that girls are three times as likely as boys to assault a family member, so mandatory arrest policies would significantly increase the arrest rates for girls who are involved in domestic disputes (Zahn et al. 2008).

Second, the arrest rates might be related to girl’s involvement in gang offenses and the police attention toward the gang problem (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004). Third, the increase might be attributed to zero tolerance policies in schools. Girls who engaged in fighting at school were once sent to detention or suspended from class, but these girls are now arrested for assault (Chesney-Lind 2005). The burgeoning number of arrests at school might have contributed to an increase in the arrest rates for assault for girls.

Despite this upsurge, girls have still not achieved parity with boys’ arrest rates. Self-report data and analysis for the National Crime Victimization Survey reveal that gender differences in violent offending have not changed meaningfully since 1980 (Zahn et al. 2008). Chesney-Lind and Belknap (2004) suggest that the “closing gender gap” in youth violence and aggressive behavior is likely a myth, and that the increase in arrest

rates for girls is a product of changing policies and practices within law enforcement agencies, home lives, and schools.

Gaps in Knowledge

Gender-Specific Prevention Programs

In 1974, the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act called for the “deinstitutionalization” of status offenders. It mandated that status offenders should not be held in locked facilities, should not be housed in the same institutions as delinquents, and eliminated the contact between juvenile and adult offenders. The intent was to decrease the probability that status offenders would become criminal offenders, award status offenders with due process rights, and promote the development of community-based rehabilitation services (OJJDP 1998).

In 1992, as part of the reauthorization of the JJDP Act, States were encouraged to identify gaps in their ability to provide appropriate services for female juvenile delinquents (42 U.S.C. 5601). The Federal government expected the States to provide gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of female delinquency and prohibit gender bias in the placement, treatment, and programming of female juvenile offenders (OJJDP 1998).

Because of their unique needs and unique histories, gender-specific prevention programs are designed to target the individual risk factors associated with female delinquency. The focus of these prevention efforts should be on the individual youth and her specific needs and strengths (Zahn 2008). When developing prevention programs for at-risk girls, research emphasizes the importance of considering the life histories and stressors of each individual girl. Implementing programs that help girls learn how to manage their risk and teach them the tools to effectively deal with the trauma of childhood abuse would be important aspects for delinquency prevention (Ruffolo et al. 2004). Additionally, these programs should focus on the protective factors that mitigate risk (Luthar 2006). For some at-risk girls, caring adults, school connectedness, school success, and religiosity helped to prevent certain forms of delinquency during early adolescence. However, for other girls, the protective factors did not prevent delinquency. This underscores the notion that there is not a “one size fits all” delinquency prevention

program (Hawkins et al. 2009). More research is needed and should address programs that are specifically designed for girls.

Conclusion

Although girls are entering the juvenile justice system at increasing rates, there is no evidence that they are more violent today than they were 20 years ago. While girls offending behaviors have remained relatively stable, the policies and practices of the juvenile court have not. The system once sought to protect girls from lives of immorality and impurity; yet, as the pendulum swings, the paternalistic nature of the courts turned to punishment. “Get tough” legislation in the form of zero tolerance laws and mandatory arrest policies have negatively impacted girls arrest rates. Yet while there has been vacillation between leniency and punishment, the recent trend toward treatment has yielded gender-specific prevention programs that seek to identify the individual risk factors for girls. In this way, evidence-based practices can identify the best prevention techniques and focus on gender pathways that challenge the invisibility of the female delinquent.

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General Strain Theory

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Overview

Agnew's General Strain Theory (GST) has been widely tested in the literature for nearly 2 decades and his body of research has generally supported the ability for GST to explain a small to moderate amount of variation in a number of different types of offending (see Jennings et al. 2009). A potential limitation of this area of research is that the majority of the empirical studies have relied on normative and predominantly white samples. The question still remains as to whether or not GST and its theoretical processes generalize to explain offending among minority populations. In this regard, several recent studies have explored the generalizability of GST to African-Americans and have found evidence in favor of replicating the GST-related processes among minorities. For example, using data from the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA), Jang and Johnson's (2003) results demonstrated that strain was related to general deviance and drug use and that anger significantly mediated the association between strain and crime. In a second study relying on the same data, Jang and Johnson (2005) examined gender differences in how GST relates to offending across gender. They found that Black women were generally more distressed than Black men. In addition, the results suggested that higher levels of depression and anxiety were observed among Black women. More recently, Jang (2007) also demonstrated that GST could explain the offending behaviors for both Black men and women. Despite this finding, additional results indicated that the mediating negative emotions for Black women were depression and anxiety whereas the mediating

negative emotion for Black men was anger. Notably, and although impressive, these studies did not deal with adolescents.

Taken together, while the evidence appears to be accumulating that GST can be extended as a theoretical explanation for offending among minority populations and among African-Americans specifically, a general theory of crime is not a general theory of crime until it can explain offending behaviors across populations other than Whites and African-Americans. Acknowledging this issue, this essay begins with a theoretical overview of Agnew's General Strain Theory (GST). This discussion is followed by an in-depth review of the limited number of studies that have empirically tested GST among Hispanic populations including studies that have examined gender differences in how the GST-related processes may explain Hispanic offending across gender. The essay concludes by offering a series of suggestions for how future GST research with Hispanic and minority populations may proceed.

General Strain Theory (GST): A Theoretical Overview

According to Agnew (1992), General Strain Theory is comprised of three basic dimensions: strain, negative emotionality, and coping resources. The construct "strain" refers to at least one of three causal processes: (1) the inability to achieve positively valued goals, (2) the lack of access to positively valued stimuli, and (3) the presence of aversive stimuli. According to this theory, strain is not the direct cause of criminal behavior; rather, strain is mediated by negative affect (e.g., anger and/or depression). These negative affective states are based upon the regency, magnitude, and duration of the stressful event.

In 2006, Agnew expanded upon his theory to include a description of the types of strain that are more likely to result in delinquency. In this extension, strains lead to criminality when they are viewed as unjust, high in magnitude, are associated with low social control, and create some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping. When strains meets these criteria, they result in crime more frequently because of their impact on (1) the individuals' ability to cope in a noncriminal manner, (2) the costs associated with noncriminality, and (3) the disposition for noncriminal coping.

GST suggests that criminal behaviors and delinquency may occur through mediation or conditioning the relationship between strain and crime. According to this mediation hypothesis, the direct effect of strain on criminality is diluted when negative affect is considered (e.g., Strain → Negative Affect → Crime/Delinquency). The conditioning hypothesis states that influences such as an individual's level of social support, social control, and coping skills interact with strain to condition its effect on criminal behavior.

Three categories of coping strategies, or methods of handling strain, were identified by Agnew (1992). First, cognitive coping consists of attitudes and thoughts individuals use to downplay the strain by reevaluating their situation. Second, emotional coping occurs when persons act upon the emotion by engaging in an activity, such as drug use or exercise. Finally, in behavioral coping, individuals seek to eliminate the source of strain by attempting revenge or withdrawing from the situation. In this final category, individuals seek to remove themselves from the unpleasant effects presented by strain.

Strain theory argues that strain may differentially affect segments of the population (such as ethnic minorities, age groups, and gender groups), hence explaining the differences in criminal activities across groups. In 2001, Agnew broadly characterized types of strains that may be closely linked to criminal behavior. These “high-risk” strains included parental rejection, child abuse or neglect, negative secondary school experiences, abusive peer relations, criminal victimization, and experiences with prejudice and discrimination. These types of strains may be more concentrated among segments of the population (including Hispanics) and as a result, increase rates of delinquent behavior among these groups.

Prior GST Research with Hispanic Populations

Delinquency and substance abuse is a serious problem among Hispanic adolescents. In fact, Dreyfoos (1990) reported that Hispanic youth were overrepresented among juvenile arrests, second to only African-American youth. Similar trends were also noted in national surveys on adolescent drug use, including Monitoring the Future (Johnston et al. 2006), and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Substance

Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2006). Additionally, Mexican-American adolescents are incarcerated at nearly twice the proportion of their representation within the general population (Flowers 1988). There is a body of empirical evidence to support the claim that these high levels of delinquent behavior are associated with increased acculturation, or the adoption of dominant cultural attitudes, behaviors, and values of the USA (Berry 1997). For example, more highly acculturated Hispanics exhibit higher rates of illicit drug use, alcohol use, and delinquency than their less acculturated counterparts (Miller et al. 2008; Hussey et al. 2007; Springer et al. 2007). This finding also holds for immigrant Hispanics compared to US born: US-born Hispanics generally show less favorable health outcomes when compared to those born in other counties (also known as the “Immigrant Paradox” (Vega and Gill 1998; Vega et al. 1998). These findings suggest that acculturation-related strains, such as conflict with parents and perceived discrimination, emerge and result in problem behaviors among the affected adolescents.

A substantial portion of the extant literature surrounding Hispanic youth and criminal behavior focuses on the relationship between acculturation and delinquency. Acculturation theory is compatible with GST, as strain may be the result of psychological conflict in pressure to adapt to their new culture while maintaining their family's traditional culture. This pressure to conform may cause strain related to language barriers, intergenerational cultural gaps (e.g., differences in acculturation between the adolescent and their parents), cultural incompatibilities, ethnic prejudice and discrimination, and commitment (or lack of commitment) to culturally prescribed protective values (Chun et al. 2003; Prado et al. 2008).

As noted briefly above, Hispanic adolescents are presented with unique sources of strains that may increase the likelihood of delinquent behavior. Within families, generational differences in family values, practices, and orientation may lead to strains within the family (parent-child discord). These Hispanic-specific types of strains have been linked to juvenile conduct problems, delinquency, and substance use (Martinez 2006; Perez et al. 2008; Vega et al. 1993). There is also evidence that these strains exert differential forces based upon neighborhood composition in which a Hispanic adolescent resides. Perez et al. (2008) found that, in

areas of low Hispanic concentration, ethnic-specific types of strain (such as intergenerational conflicts) were related to increased violent delinquency. These effects may be the result of pressure to assimilate and fewer social support networks to maintain close ties to the Hispanic culture. This may place substantial strain on the adolescents to acculturate, distancing them from their parental support structure regarding the importance of the Hispanic culture and way of life.

Another source of strain that is specific to ethnic minorities is ethnic prejudice and discrimination. A large body of empirical literature suggests that overt and perceived discrimination are constantly present in the daily lives of ethnic minorities, and this prejudice and discrimination is related to increased levels of psychological stress (Finch et al. 2001; Fisher et al. 2000), including behavioral and delinquency problems (Perez et al. 2008). The extant literature on ethnic prejudice and discrimination that focuses specifically on Hispanics reports extensive negative mental health effects exerted on Hispanic populations as a result of discrimination. To illustrate these effects, Finch et al. (2000) linked depression and discrimination in a study of Mexican adults. Among adolescents, discrimination appears to negatively impact self-esteem (Fisher et al. 2000). As discussed above, Agnew (2006) recently detailed prejudice and discrimination as one of the strains most likely to result in criminality.

Overall, GST generalizes well to Hispanic populations (Perez et al. 2008). Of the four traditional strains, three (academic strain, family physical abuse, and peer physical abuse) were positively associated with violent delinquency. Although economic strain was not significantly related to violence, GST as a whole appears to be generally applicable in Hispanic adolescent populations.

In summary, the extant literature suggests that Hispanic adolescents are at increased risk of delinquent and criminal behavior. Directly related to the strain produced as a result of higher levels of acculturation in Hispanic adolescents, higher rates of delinquency may result among more highly acculturated Hispanics compared to their less acculturated counterparts. The social structure also appears to play a role in violent delinquency, as Hispanic adolescents in populations with a small number of other Hispanics appear to be at increased risk for violence compared to those in

environments more densely populated by Hispanics. These ethnic minority-specific strains appear to result in psychological conflict, and therefore, delinquent behavior.

Gender Differences in GST-Related Processes Among Hispanic Populations

There is a clear gender and ethnic gap in criminal activity, as men and minorities consistently have the highest rates of delinquency and criminality. Specifically, males are more likely to engage in violent crime compared to females, while females engage in status offenses and minor crimes more frequently (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Steffensmeier et al. 2005). Broidy and Agnew (1997) posited four explanations as to why males offend more often than females: (1) males experience greater strain than females; (2) males are subjected to qualitatively different types of strain than females, with male strain predisposing them to delinquency; (3) males respond to strain differently than females, and male responses are more likely to result in crime; and (4) males respond to strain and anger with criminal activity more often than females.

The literature on gender and Hispanic offending is relatively sparse. Yin et al. (1999) found gender differences in involvement in recreational activities and delinquent behavior. In another study, Jennings et al. (2009) sought to address this gap in the literature by examining gender differences among Mexican-American adolescents using GST. In this study, strain was associated with anger and depression; however, only anger was significantly related to interpersonal aggression and property offending. Additionally, direct effects from strain remained even after including negative emotionality in the model. This indicates that strain exerts both direct and indirect effects on delinquent behavior, and is only partially mediated by negative emotionality within this population. In a test of the conditioning hypothesis, Jennings et al. (2009) found that gender differences exist in response to strain. For example, females were less likely to use interpersonal aggression or threatening when they made use of physical coping resources when feeling depressed. Property offending for females was less when feeling depressed or angry if social support

and spiritual coping resources were high. Overall, support for GST in Hispanic populations is limited in scope, and the evidence for the theory is mixed in the extant literature.

Directions for Future GST Research

Taken together, the recent emerging research reviewed above that has investigated GST and its related processes among Hispanic populations appears to support the generalizability of GST as an explanation for Hispanic offending. Having said this, caution is still needed before a more definitive statement can be made regarding the robustness of GST's predictive validity and reliability among Hispanics. For example, the handful of GST studies that have focused on Hispanics have only looked at one type of strain: the presentation of a noxious stimuli. Agnew (1992) has suggested that other types of strains such as the removal of a positively valued stimuli (loss of a boyfriend, parent's divorce, death of a loved one) and/or the failure to achieve positively valued stimuli (plan to achieve a college education and then fail to actually realize this goal) are equally stressful and strain-producing events. Furthermore, the prior GST research with Hispanic populations have either relied on one negative emotion (predominantly anger) or have only focused on anger and depression. It is important for future Hispanic GST research to include other important affective states such as anxiety.

In addition, the prior Hispanic GST studies have almost exclusively utilized Mexican-American samples (see Miller et al. 2008 for an exception). Thus, while it is an important step to demonstrate that GST can explain offending among populations other than Whites and African-Americans, it is equally important for future research to recognize that Hispanics are a culturally heterogeneous group and that these Hispanic subgroups (e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans) are socialized and reared in different historical, socioeconomic, and acculturation backgrounds (Zamboanga et al. 2004). Thus, future GST research with Hispanics should explore the possible within-group differences among Hispanics in how the GST-related processes may explain their offending behaviors. Finally, the prior GST studies with Hispanics have made use of cross-sectional data. While this is not necessarily problematic and acknowledging that prior GST

research with non-Hispanic populations have been mixed regarding the support for GST longitudinally (e.g., see Agnew and White 1992), future GST research with Hispanics should attempt to analyze the GST-related processes longitudinally when possible in order to determine the actual temporal order of the events, for example, the strain leads to the negative emotion and the negative emotion then leads to crime.

Ultimately, the limited but growing number of empirical studies investigating the ability of Agnew's General Strain Theory to explain Hispanic offending has revealed varying levels of support for its generalizability. Going forward, future research should recognize the limitations of the prior GST Hispanic research and make an effort to replicate the findings when data permits in order to provide additional evidence regarding the generality of General Strain Theory as a general theory of crime. As it stands now, the evidence supports extending GST to Hispanic populations and future research should be encouraged to include Hispanics and other ethnic groups when testing GST.

Cross-References

► [Delinquency](#)

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Generativity

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In developmental sciences, generativity refers to an interest in guiding the next generation and being concerned about providing for its well-being. Generative individuals adopt this psychosocial goal that involves a focus on others in ways that foster their development and contributes to society. As originally conceived by Erikson (1963), the leading early theorist in – understanding generativity across the life span, generativity can involve both agentic and communal forms. Communal forms focus on nurturing others and a having a general tendency to respond to others in a caring manner. Agentic forms involve the creation of materials or products that will outlive individuals and can be left for future generations to enjoy (see also McAdams et al. 1998). Both are equally generative, and it seems that individuals may focus on one form more than another, with, e.g., men adopting more agentic approaches while women adopt more communal ones (see Bradley 2007).

According to Erikson's (1963) conceptualization of psychosocial development across the life span, individuals progress through stages, and those stages involve an increasing readiness to interact and become aware of a widening social radius. Erikson espoused the view that adolescents were not much concerned about generativity. He viewed adolescents as more preoccupied with issues of identity, personal productivity, and intimacy than broader concerns about society and fostering the next generation (Erikson 1963). Other recent and well-accepted formulations of generativity adopt a similarly age-dependent view and also focus on midlife as the stage most conducive to experiencing and demonstrating generative concerns. Most notably, McAdams et al. (1998) model of generativity accepts that preoccupation and concern with generativity may emerge before middle adulthood but views societies as structured in ways that essentially restrict the ability to exercise generativity to middle age and later life. Under this view, adolescents and young adults simply do not have opportunities to act generatively, and generativity is not expected of them since societies tend to view adults as the primary caretakers of the next generation.

The age-graded view of generativity tends not to focus on its antecedents. Yet, adolescents do exhibit considerable ► **Prosocial Behavior** tendencies. Although society may not be structured for them to exhibit generativity, their prosocial tendencies, especially toward family members and peers, is well established (e.g., Eisenberg et al. 1991). Similarly, youth routinely engage in volunteering, community events, and other civic-minded activities (Youniss & Yates 1997) similar to those that adults engage in when they are deemed generative, and which can be deemed as developing the disposition to be generative.

The fundamental way that generativity is indexed in psychological studies is through analyzing life narratives. Recently, e.g., researchers have attempted to determine what generativity might look like for adolescents, given that they do not have the typical opportunities to practice it. These studies have found that generative themes during early adulthood relate closely to prosocial reasoning, volunteering behavior, and personal-value choices during adolescence, as well as to parental teaching (such as their focus on kindness) and behaviors (such as authoritative parenting) (see Frensch et al. 2007; Lawford et al. 2005; Pratt et al. 2001). That research also has shown that

generative themes remain stable over time, and that adolescents who are generative at 16 tend to be generative later in early adulthood (Frensch et al. 2007). Generativity also appears to transfer from one generation to the other; children with authoritative parents present a notable sense of generativity, owing to their parents' prosocial traits (Peterson 2006; Peterson et al. 1997). Adults who are deemed generative model or encourage higher levels of generativity in younger family members; they do so, e.g., by providing more compelling examples that facilitate the intergenerational transmission of prosocial values like generativity (Pratt et al. 2008).

Until quite recently, generativity mainly had been treated primarily as a midlife construct, as it originally had been formulated by Erikson (1963). Increasing evidence supports the view that generativity is a construct that is meaningful for the understanding of adolescence, and that examining generativity during the adolescent period appears critical to understanding generativity itself. Having recognized this, the field has broadened its focus to examine the developmental roots of generativity, especially in family contexts, and demonstrated the importance of generativity to the study of adolescence.

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Genetic Influences and Criminal Careers

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Beginning in 1986, Alfred Blumstein and his colleagues published a series of research reports and journal articles that reshaped the criminological discipline (Blumstein and Cohen 1987; Blumstein et al. 1988; Blumstein et al. 1986). These studies spotlighted the importance of studying “criminal careers,” which is usually defined as an individual's involvement in crime across their life span. The amount of research surrounding the criminal career paradigm has grown quickly during the last 2 decades (Piquero et al. 2003) and, in general, this body of literature has focused on three dimensions of the criminal career: onset, stability/persistence, and desistance.

Criminal onset, or the age at which a person begins their criminal career, has emerged as one of the more important aspects of the criminal career. Research has revealed, for instance, that an early onset of antisocial behavior is predictive of a longer criminal career, more frequent offending, more serious offending, and a lower likelihood of desisting (DeLisi 2005; Le Blanc and Loeber 1998; Loeber and Le Blanc 1990; Moffitt 1993; Piquero et al. 2003). In addition, stability/persistence, or the prevalence and frequency with which an individual is involved in criminal activity, is another important aspect of the criminal career. The most serious offenders tend to have the longest criminal careers

and tend to offend with the greatest frequency (Moffitt 1993). Finally, research has examined the factors that predict the end of a criminal career, or a process known as desistance. Definitions of desistance vary with some criminologists identifying desistance as a normative process that is rooted in the person's ability to successfully transition into adulthood despite the strains of adolescence (Moffitt 1993) and others pointing to the need for changes in local-life circumstances to facilitate desistance (Sampson and Laub 1993).

A long line of empirical research has examined the various factors that are associated with onset, persistence, and desistance of the criminal career (Piquero et al. 2003). The main drawback to this research, however, is that studies have focused almost exclusively on environmental factors and, at the same time, have ignored the potential role of genetics. As a result, comparatively little is known about whether, and to what extent, genetic factors are important for understanding constructs extracted from the criminal career literature. The following discussion is divided into two main sections. First, the evidence bearing on the influence of genetic factors for antisocial behavior will be reviewed. Second, attention will be given to research that has investigated whether genetic factors are important for understanding the onset, persistence, and desistance of antisocial behavior.

Genetic Influences on Antisocial Behavior

Behavioral genetic research analyzes the extent to which genetic and environmental factors influence a phenotype (Beaver 2009; Plomin 1990; Walsh and Beaver 2009). A phenotype can be defined as any measurable trait or behavior such as height, intelligence, or involvement in delinquency. Researchers typically focus on differences – or variation – in phenotypes across individuals. For example, a researcher may wish to identify the level of genetic influence on the variation in height across a population. To do so, variance in the phenotype is decomposed into three components: heritability (h^2), shared environment (c^2), and nonshared environment (e^2). The heritability component measures the amount of variance in the phenotype that can be attributed to differences in genetic material between the individuals in the study. For example, a heritability estimate of 0.50 would mean that one-half of the variance in the phenotype is

attributable to differences in genetic material among respondents in the sample.

The environmental components, c^2 and e^2 , estimate the proportion of variance in the phenotype that can be attributed to shared and nonshared environmental factors, respectively. The shared environment captures any environmental influences that make two siblings more alike. Growing up in poverty and experiencing a divorce could be two examples of shared environmental influences. Nonshared environmental influences, on the other hand, capture environmental effects that make siblings different from one another. As the name implies, nonshared environments are events that are not experienced by both siblings. Nonshared environments may also arise when siblings experience the same objective event but have different subjective interpretations or perceptions of the event (Turkheimer and Waldron 2000). Examples of nonshared environments include exposure to different peer groups, exposure to different teachers, and experiencing different parenting strategies. The effects of measurement error are also captured by the nonshared environmental component.

The most common way to estimate the three variance components (h^2 , c^2 , and e^2) is by analyzing samples containing kinship pairs that vary in terms of their level of genetic relatedness. (It should be noted that some behavioral genetic research designs do not necessitate the inclusion of siblings with different levels of genetic relatedness [e.g., adoption studies]. However, these studies are less common than the twin method and, therefore, will not be discussed at length.) The most widely used behavioral genetic methodology is the twin-based research design. Direct estimates of genetic and environmental influences can be estimated by comparing the observed degree of similarity between monozygotic (MZ) twin pairs to the observed degree of similarity between dizygotic (DZ) twin pairs. Since MZ twins share 100% of their DNA and since DZ twins share 50% of their distinguishing DNA, the only reason that MZ twins should be more similar to each other on a phenotype than DZ twins is because MZ twins share more DNA. To illustrate, if MZ twins resemble one another more closely than do DZ twins on a measure of self-control, for example, the researcher can conclude that genetic factors explain a portion of the variance in levels of self-control (Beaver 2009; Plomin 1990; Wright and Beaver 2005).

There is now an extensive line of research that has employed behavioral genetic methods to understand the etiology of antisocial behavior. A number of pieces of scholarship have been published to summarize the findings of studies examining the genetic basis to antisocial behaviors. In one of the first reviews of the behavioral genetic literature bearing on antisocial behavior, Adrian Raine (1993:71) reviewed nearly 30 studies and concluded that, “genetic influences are nontrivial and probably account for as much variance as environmental influences in relation to crime.” In other words, Raine argued that genetic differences across individuals are responsible for approximately half of the variance in criminal outcomes. Raine’s review, while an important first step in establishing the genetic influence on antisocial behaviors, was a narrative summary of the literature, not one that estimated the precise influence of genetic factors on antisocial phenotypes. Since the time that Raine’s review was published, four meta-analyses have been conducted that provide direct estimates of the heritability of antisocial behaviors.

The first meta-analysis to examine the behavioral genetic research on antisocial behavior was published by Mason and Frick (1994). Their analysis included 15 studies and the results were quite revealing: The average heritability estimate was 0.48, meaning that 48% of the variance in antisocial behaviors was explained by differences in genetic factors. Heritability estimates were larger for severe antisocial behavior ($h^2 = 0.45$) compared to nonsevere antisocial behavior ($h^2 = 0.00$). A second meta-analysis included 17 studies and the results indicated that 50% of the variance in aggression was explained by genetic factors (Miles and Carey 1997). Additionally, the study authors examined a number of possible moderating influences. For instance, they explored the possibility that heritability estimates varied as a function of the study’s methodological rigor or the demographic composition of the original study. Their analyses revealed that samples of males and samples containing older respondents provided larger heritability estimates than female samples and samples with younger respondents.

A third meta-analysis conducted by Rhee and Waldman (2002) examined 51 studies. Their results were largely in line with the estimates of previous meta-analyses and indicated that genetic influences accounted for 41% of the variance in antisocial

behaviors. The fourth and final meta-analysis on this topic was carried out by Ferguson (2010) and included all studies published between 1996 and 2006 that had examined the genetic origins to antisocial phenotypes ($N = 38$ studies). The meta-analytic results revealed that genetic factors accounted for 56% of the variance in antisocial behaviors.

Clearly, much empirical attention has been devoted to estimating the genetic and environmental underpinnings to antisocial behavior. These four meta-analyses combine to cover more than 100 studies and several thousand respondents. The most striking result from these meta-analyses is the consistency of two findings. First, about half of the variance in antisocial behavior can be attributed to genetic influences. Second, environmental influences are also responsible for about half of the variance in antisocial behaviors. Shared and nonshared environments do not, however, have equal effects on antisocial behavior. According to a recent literature review, Moffitt (2005) estimated that across studies, shared environmental influences account for only about 15–20% of the variance, while nonshared environmental influences account for approximately 30–35% of the variance in antisocial phenotypes. Thus, it appears that genetic and nonshared environmental factors are most important factors for understanding the etiology of delinquency, criminal involvement, and antisocial behavior (Ferguson 2010; Fishbein 1990; Harris 1995, 1998; Mason and Frick 1994; Miles and Carey 1997; Moffitt 2005; Plomin and Bergeman 1991; Plomin and Daniels 1987; Raine 1993; Rhee and Waldman 2002; Rowe 1990, 2002; Turkheimer and Waldron 2000).

Genetic Influences on Onset, Persistence, and Change in Antisocial Behavior

Analyzing the onset, persistence, and desistance from antisocial behavior has become a popular focus among criminologists (Piquero et al. 2003). This line of research, unfortunately, has almost exclusively focused on the sociological factors that account for antisocial behavior across the life course (Walsh and Beaver 2009; Wright et al. 2008). At the same time, however, behavioral genetic research has consistently shown that antisocial behavior is partially the function of genetic influences (Ferguson 2010; Mason and Frick 1994; Miles and Carey 1997; Rhee and Waldman 2002).

Juxtaposing these two lines of research leads to a new research focus – one that examines the genetic factors that influence the various dimensions of criminal careers. A small body of literature focusing on these issues has begun to emerge.

Genetic Influences on the Onset of Antisocial Behavior

Criminal career research has revealed that an early onset of antisocial behavior is a risk factor for persistent and serious offending (DeLisi 2005; Moffitt 1993), meaning that the most serious offenders will display problem behaviors in early childhood (Robins 1978). This necessarily raises the possibility that genetic factors are partially involved in the onset of criminal behavior (DiLalla and Gottesman 1989; Moffitt 1993). A study by Taylor et al. (2000) examined this possibility directly and provided some support for the connection between genetics and early onset of antisocial behavior. The study authors analyzed a sample of boys between the ages of 10 and 12 years. The sample was divided into three mutually exclusive groups: early starters, late starters, and nondelinquents. The early starters evinced higher levels of negative emotionality and a higher level of impulsivity than did late starters and nondelinquents. Also, early starters were more likely to have relatives who exhibited antisocial behavioral problems and conduct disorder. This latter finding hinted at the possibility that an early onset of antisocial behavior may be transmitted from generation to generation via genetic factors. The evidence supported this hypothesis by showing that MZ twins had a greater concordance rate for being early starters (55% concordant) than did DZ twins (29% concordant).

Other studies have also explored the genetic underpinnings to childhood-onset behavioral problems (Arseneault et al. 2003; Thapar et al. 2005; van Beijsterveldt et al. 2003; Van Hulle et al. 2009; Viding et al. 2005). Analyzing a sample of 7-year-old children, Viding et al. (2005) reported that 81% of the variance in antisocial behavior was due to genetic factors. This finding, however, was limited to those children who also exhibited psychopathic tendencies, such as showing signs of callousness or an unemotional temperament. For children not exhibiting psychopathic tendencies, the heritability estimate was lower ($h^2 = 0.30$).

Recently, research has revealed that aggressive behavior exhibited as early as age 3 is largely the result of genetic factors (van Beijsterveldt et al. 2003). Similar findings were reported for conduct problems exhibited by children between the ages of 4 and 9 years (Van Hulle et al. 2009). Arseneault et al. (2003) also reported that antisocial behavior exhibited at age 5 was primarily the result of genetic factors. Analysis of twin pairs in this study indicated that 65% of the variance in antisocial behavior reported by the child's mother was due to genetic factors. Additional analyses indicated that genetic factors accounted for 82% of the shared variance across mother, teacher, examiner-observer, and the child's self-reports of antisocial behavior (Arseneault et al. 2003; see also Jaffee et al. 2005).

Genetic Influences on Stability/Persistence in Antisocial Behavior

Criminal behavior is often marked by high levels of stability/persistence over time (Huesmann et al. 1984, 2009; Olweus 1979; Robins 1978). Huesmann et al. (2009), for example, reported a continuity coefficient of 0.50 for male aggression and 0.42 for female aggression across a 40 year time period. Most criminological studies examining the factors that contribute to stability/persistence have focused on social factors (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993), but it is also equally possible that genetic factors partially underlie the stability/persistence of antisocial behavior.

Behavioral geneticists have examined the heritability of stability/persistence and the results have consistently revealed that stability is governed, in part, by genetic factors (Eley et al. 2003; Haberstick et al. 2006; Lyons et al. 1995; Malone et al. 2004; Reiss et al. 2000; van Beijsterveldt et al. 2003; Van Hulle et al. 2009). For example, Reiss and colleagues (2000) analyzed data drawn from a sample of adolescent siblings. Importantly, information was gathered from each respondent at two different points in time. The first wave of data collection occurred when most respondents were beginning adolescence. The second wave of data collection was conducted approximately 3 years later. Employing behavioral genetic methods, the researchers estimated that 69% of the stability in antisocial behavior was the result of genetic factors.

Eley et al. (2003) performed a similar analysis by drawing data from twin pairs at two time points (time 1 = childhood and time 2 = adolescence). When

the authors performed longitudinal behavioral genetic analyses, the results indicated that 99% of the stability of aggressive behavior from time 1 to time 2 was the result of shared genetic factors. When nonaggressive behavior was analyzed, the heritability estimates revealed that 46% of the stability in nonaggressive behaviors between time 1 and time 2 was due to shared genetic influences.

Lyons et al. (1995) conducted one of the only behavioral genetic studies to examine antisocial behavior from adolescence into late adulthood. Their analyses revealed that juvenile delinquency was less influenced by genetic factors than was adulthood criminal behavior. Specifically, the estimated heritability of juvenile delinquency was 0.07 while the estimated heritability of adult criminal behavior was 0.43. The correlation between juvenile delinquency and adulthood criminal behavior was 0.44, evincing a moderate degree of stability. Decomposing this correlation, the authors reported that approximately one-third of the stability of antisocial behavior was explained by genetic factors.

Genetic Influences on Changes in Antisocial Behavior

Not only can genetic factors explain stability in antisocial behavior over time, but it is also equally logical to assume that genetic factors can account for changes (including desistance) in antisocial behaviors over the life course (Collins 2004). Indeed, much of the research that examined the heritability of the stability of antisocial behaviors also examined whether genetic factors explained changes in antisocial behaviors across time (Eley et al. 2003; Reiss et al. 2000; van Beijsterveldt et al. 2003). Overall, the results garnered from these studies indicate that genetic factors are largely implicated in explaining changes in antisocial behaviors. For example, Reiss et al. (2000) reported that 67% of the changes in antisocial behavior from time 1 to time 2 were the result of genetic factors. Similar results were reported by van Beijsterveldt and colleagues (2003) and by Eley et al. (2003).

At first glance, it might seem a bit counterintuitive to think that genetic factors – something that is assumed to be immutable – can explain changes in behavior. In many ways, this seems akin to trying to explain a variable with a constant. While it is certainly true that a person's genotype – that is, their unique sequence of DNA – does not change over time (expect

in very rare instances), it is not true that the effects that emanate from DNA remain constant. In fact, there is a good deal of research showing that genetic effects ebb and flow in response to environmental factors, a phenomenon known as gene–environment interplay. In general, there are two main types of gene–environment interplay that have application to criminology. One form of gene–environment interplay, known as gene X environment interaction (GxE), shows that genetic effects can be contingent upon the presence of environmental factors (Caspi et al. 2002). To understand GXEs, imagine a person who is genetically predisposed to aggressive behavior (Eley et al. 2003; van Beijsterveldt et al. 2003). Imagine also that these aggressive tendencies can be stifled under certain environmental conditions and amplified in the presence of other environmental factors. For this person, the effect that their genetic predispositions have on antisocial behaviors will be dependent on the environmental factors that they encounter, which is precisely what is meant by a GxE.

The second type of gene–environment interplay is known as gene–environment correlation (rGE) and explains how genetic factors can shape, modify, and aid in selecting certain environments (DiLalla 2002; Kendler and Baker 2007; Scarr 1992; Scarr and McCartney 1983). Since genetic factors can influence environmental exposure, rGEs may also be important for linking genetic factors to behavioral changes. One type of rGE – active rGE – explains that a person's genotype influences their self-selection of environments. In this way, active rGE states that people seek out environments that fit their genetic makeup. If people actively seek environments that allow them to express their genetic tendencies, it may be the case that genetic factors remain dormant until the environment allows for their expression (i.e., GxE and rGE). In this way, genetic factors may not be important early in life when parents determine their children's environments. However, as the child ages into an adolescent and eventually into an adult, certain genetic predispositions may begin to emerge as a result of self-selection into environments conducive to their expression.

In addition to GxE and rGE, there are other ways that genetic effects may account for changes in behavior across the life course. Genes can be triggered “on” and “off” by certain biological or developmental processes

(Reiss et al. 2000). For example, puberty brings about many biological changes that are thought to affect gene expression (Wright et al. 2008). Recent scientific developments have also revealed that genetic expression can be controlled by epigenetic processes (Beaver et al. 2009; Walsh 2009). Thus, gene–environment interplay is not the only avenue by which genetic effects can change over time.

Against this backdrop, it should not be surprising that an emerging line of inquiry has revealed that heritability estimates for many phenotypes increase with age (Bergen et al. 2007; Van Hulle et al. 2009). For example, heritability estimates for IQ tend to increase from adolescence to adulthood and similar findings have emerged for antisocial behavior (Bergen et al. 2007; Lyons et al. 1995; Van Hulle et al. 2009). Some of the above-cited meta-analyses examined the moderating influence of age on heritability estimates. A number of these studies reported that heritability estimates were larger in older samples (Miles and Carey 1997; Raine 1993). One explanation of this phenomenon may be that certain genes lie dormant until adulthood, at which time they are turned on and begin exerting influence above and beyond the genetic effects that were dominant in adolescence. In other words, it may be the case that aging into adulthood triggers genetic effects that were not present in adolescence.

A second explanation of the heritability–age link may be that offenders most influenced by genetic effects are those most likely to continue their offending well into adulthood. Delinquent behavior is normative in adolescence but is non-normative in adulthood (DeLisi 2005; Moffitt 1993). As a result, it is expected that heritability estimates would be lower for adolescent delinquency when compared to adulthood offending (Lyons et al. 1995). The question therefore becomes: Is adolescence-limited delinquency influenced less by genetic factors than persistent delinquency that extends into adulthood? One study suggests that this may be the case (Dick et al. 2009). This study reported that certain alleles of the GABRA2 gene delineated between two groups of individuals – those with persistent externalizing behavioral problems and those with declining externalizing behavioral problems. Specifically, the odds of being classified in the persistent group increased as a function of the number of minor alleles on the GABRA2 gene that the individual carried.

The above review has outlined several ways in which genetic effects may account for changes in antisocial behavior across the life course. One question that has not been addressed, however, is whether genetic effects can account for desistance from crime. There is one study that directly addressed this question (Beaver et al. 2008). Beaver and colleagues examined the genetic influences on desistance from crime. Specifically, the authors analyzed the effect of five measured genes (DAT1, DRD2, DRD4, 5HTT, and MAOA) on desistance from crime using data extracted from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Their statistical models indicated that four of the five genes included in the analysis predicted desistance. Moreover, these genes interacted with marital status to affect desistance; the genes were more influential in predicting desistance for respondents who were also married. Interestingly, however, these effects were only observed in males.

Conclusion

Criminal career research has highlighted the importance of understanding the developmental processes that underlie the onset, persistence, and desistance of crime over the life course (Le Blanc and Loeber 1998; Loeber and Le Blanc 1990; Piquero et al. 2003). At the same time, findings from behavioral genetic research have indicated that each of the elements of a criminal career is influenced by genetic factors. An early onset of antisocial behavior appears to be partially driven by genetic influences (e.g., Taylor et al. 2000), and stability and change in antisocial behavior over time also appear to be influenced by genetic factors (e.g., Reiss et al. 2000). Whether these two somewhat disparate lines of research are able to be blended together into a coherent and unified theory of criminal careers remains to be seen.

Cross-References

► Evolutionary Perspectives on Adolescence

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Giftedness: The Asset-Vulnerability Paradox

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Overview

Adolescents with extraordinary intellectual ability or talent face the same maturation-related developmental tasks as anyone else their age, among them developing identity and sense of self, appropriate autonomy, relationships with peers and significant others, differentiation from and within immediate family, and direction for the future. However, scholars have argued that how they experience development is qualitatively different from the experience of others their age, and the tempo of maturation may also differ from that of same-age peers who are less able. Characteristics associated with giftedness in clinical and research literature, such as sensitivity, intensity, and one or more of five kinds of overexcitabilities, add a layer to universal aspects of social and emotional development, possibly also exacerbating negative responses to expected challenges.

Introduction

The developmental tasks of adolescents who are gifted are the same tasks that others their age have: forging an identity; forming direction for the future; navigating social complexities with peers; moving toward maturity in a significant relationship; figuring out how to move toward a differentiated relationship with their parents and siblings; and moving toward autonomy in self-care and decision-making (Peterson 2007). However, clinicians and scholars have increasingly contended that their subjective experience of development differs, given the potential impact of various characteristics associated with giftedness (Worrell 2009). This discussion will focus on highly able students' experience of adolescence after a presentation of pertinent concerns that reflect controversies within the field of gifted education.

Giftedness as a Construct

First, though many educators and researchers may assume that the meaning of *giftedness* is unambiguous

and universally understood, it is a construct, varying in meaning according to the perspectives of perceiver and context. What is valued as endowment or performance or both, and perhaps then seen as giftedness, is affected by culture, socioeconomic factors, geography, and purpose of formal or informal assessment. Academic or professional achievement, service to others, creativity, and adaptability, for example, may each be at the top of a list of criteria for giftedness. Eligibility for special programs for highly able students may require demonstration of ability, and yet some cultures do not value "showing what you know" or "standing out" (Peterson 1999). *Gifted* often refers to individuals with a high IQ, but also to those with demonstrated excellence in a variety of academic and nonacademic areas. Yet intellectual ability, as measured by a standardized test or implied by academic achievement, is often the major, if not the only, consideration when determining eligibility for programs, even though no single score can accurately predict outstanding performance (Worrell 2009). High-ability academic achievers are also often the focus of research. Therein lies one limitation of what has been determined to characterize "gifted students," since low achievers are often not identified or included in studies. Also pertinent here is the reality that definitions used by school districts vary considerably, depending on funding and philosophy undergirding service delivery. Even when standardized test scores are used to determine eligibility, cutoff scores can differ from district to district.

A Highly Idiosyncratic Population

Second, the range of measured intellectual ability among students identified as gifted is potentially as broad as the entire ability spectrum in most heterogeneous classrooms. Therefore, although any teen deemed to be gifted may have few available intellectual peers at school, a profoundly gifted child may be as different from a moderately gifted child in ability as the latter is from a child with low-average ability, including in social and emotional characteristics. As the level of difference increases, social difficulties can understandably also increase, for instance. General, broad-brush statements about "gifted adolescents," even when based on empirical studies, are problematic unless a specific subgroup is identified. It is important to recognize that individuals who are gifted are a highly idiosyncratic population.

Who Gets the Label?

A third concern is related to whether the definition of *gifted* applies to all individuals with high ability in a particular domain (e.g., school-based knowledge, talent in the arts, physical ability, leadership), regardless of motivation to perform at high levels in that area. The Marland (1972) definition, still commonly applied in school programs, includes “the potential to achieve,” yet research samples are often not inclusive enough across cultural, socioeconomic, family circumstances, or performance spectra to reflect characteristics and needs of a broad range of students with high potential. Such students may be intellectually nimble, multitalented, and impressively bilingual, but not demonstrate the behaviors dominant-culture teachers look for when identifying students for further assessment – verbal assertiveness, social ease, and behaviors which affirm and support the teacher (Peterson 1999). Academic underachievers with exceptionally high ability who are not performing academically by choice, because of circumstances, or because of developmental “stuckness” are not likely to have an appropriate presence in the research samples of “gifted students” (Peterson 2009b).

When perceptions of adolescents deemed to be gifted are based on only positive stereotypes, educators and parents may not recognize and address nonacademic developmental concerns and counseling needs (NAGC 2009). Giftedness does not preclude challenges related to health issues, trauma, death of someone close, and family stress due to relocation, military deployment, and unemployment, for example. When clients are studied at rare counseling agencies focused on giftedness, findings about mental health may be skewed in the direction of psychopathology. In contrast, findings may be skewed in a positive direction when scholars target readily available subjects – in advanced classes, in summer programs, in residential or other special schools, and in school programs for students with exceptional ability (Peterson 2008a). Eligibility for these schools and programs may have been determined largely by a single criterion, in spite of considerable advocacy regarding use of multiple criteria (Nimz 2009).

Impact of Choice of Research Methods and Subjects

Fourth, scholarly work related to giftedness has generally focused on the phenomenon as positive, not

negative, and has not attended much to the asset-burden paradox of giftedness (Yoo and Moon 2006). This gap extends to little attention to counseling concerns with potential impact on classroom work and career. Related to this concern is the relatively rare use of qualitative and longitudinal methods when studying giftedness, precluding extensive exploration of the subjective world of gifted individuals over time, including unexpressed thoughts and emotions. The common use of quantitative measures may preclude exploring the *experience* of development when there is an overlay of giftedness, as well as developmental concerns. Researchers of giftedness generally have also not explored specific areas such as eating disorders, self-mutilation, substance abuse, sexual abuse, obsessive-compulsive disorder, parent-child conflict, arrested development, and physical disability, all of these potentially occurring during adolescence. However, school counselors should be alert to these phenomena when working with gifted students, even when focused on academic, life, and career planning (Peterson 2006a).

The following sections will elaborate on some of the concerns just presented. In addition, characteristics associated with giftedness and pertinent developmental issues, as discussed in clinical and empirical literature, will receive attention.

Characteristics Associated with Giftedness

Adolescents who are gifted are socially, emotionally, and cognitively complex. Pertinent challenges are likely compounded by environmental factors (Peterson 2007). The emphasis here will be on social and emotional development, given its importance to school success, life satisfaction, and the experience of adolescence. School- and family-related issues all have social and emotional dimensions. Various characteristics may put highly able adolescents at risk for poor educational and personal outcomes (Peterson 2006a, 2009b).

Sensitivity, Intensity, Drivenness, and Overexcitabilities

Sensitivity, intensity, and drivenness are three of those characteristics. All of these can be strengths, of course, but can also negatively affect fit in the classroom and relationships with teachers, peers, and parents. How immediate family views and responds to characteristics and behaviors related to giftedness has impact on sense

of self (Peterson and Moon 2008). Extreme sensitivity to visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory stimuli may contribute to discomfort and anxiety at home, in competitive classrooms, and in indoor and outdoor employment. In addition, sensitivities may contribute to difficulties during normal developmental transitions and after negative life events (Peterson 2008b). Mendaglio (2007) connected the rapid information processing that characterizes intellectual giftedness to heightened, multifaceted sensitivity. He argued that thinking more means feeling more and being more self-critical, emotionally intense, and emotionally labile. Emotional intensity contributes to experiencing reality differently and more intensely, potentially with both positive and negative effects. He added that individuals who are gifted are likely to have a strong awareness of their emotional states and a heightened perspective taking. However, whether the sensitivity is demonstrated depends on socialization.

As reflected in a longitudinal study of the experiences of highly able students after negative life events (Peterson et al. 2009b), intensity may be reflected in increasingly high stress during the school years, frustration, self-criticism, perfectionism, extreme competitiveness, and being perceived as “too much.” Asynchronous development, with cognitive outpacing social, emotional, and physical development (Alsop 2003), increases as ability level increases, perhaps contributing to interpersonal challenges, being given inappropriate, adult-like roles and responsibility at home or at school, and being unable to process difficult situations emotionally (Peterson 2009b). Drivenness may be reflected in single-minded pursuit of goals (cf. Lovecky 1992).

Piechowski (1999) brought the concept of overexcitabilities (intellectual, sensual, imaginal, emotional, psychomotor) to the giftedness literature, including the theory of positive disintegration (cf. Mendaglio 2008). That theory provided a framework for the intersection of trauma and giftedness in Peterson’s (2010) longitudinal study of a female adolescent. After applying previous learning to uncontrollable situations unsuccessfully, other strategies may lead first to disintegration and then to advanced development through self-education, self-correction, selecting higher values, maintaining a strong sense of justice, connecting to others with empathy, and taking responsibility for self and others.

High Control, Out of Control

Adolescents with high ability may be able to feel in control, and be in control, in situations where they can employ their intellectual strengths and verbal dexterity. However, emotions may feel out of control, accompanied by urgency to control or deny them, including during the transition into puberty and beyond (Peterson 2008b). Figuring out how to respond to societal gender expectations (Reis 2006), how to self-affirm as a sexual being, how to navigate a complex peer culture, how to maintain relationships with parents while differentiating from them, and perhaps how to resolve issues related to sexual orientation – these may be uncomfortable challenges involving uncertainty and the threat of change-related loss (Peterson). Venturing into unknown social, academic, physical, or emotional territory may be unsettling.

One of these challenges was reflected in a retrospective qualitative study of young adults who were gifted and homosexual (Peterson and Rischar 2000). Most had wondered seriously about their sexual orientation before leaving elementary school, especially concerned after puberty. Reflecting on adolescence, these individuals described taunts, depression, and suicidal ideation, concerns about abandonment, a sense of danger, less freedom than their peers to develop relationships, and, for a few, participating in “ultra-hetero” or intentionally homophobic behaviors as self-protection. Academic, social, and emotional aspects of their lives had been affected in some way, including “hyperachievement” as compensation and protection. Although 71% had experienced significant depression, only 29% of parents and no teachers were told about it. Most “came out” shortly after high school and were relieved to find support in college. Image protection, especially for stellar performers in academics and talent areas, had been one of several concerns.

Protection of Image

Other qualitative studies (Peterson 2002; Peterson and Rischar 2000) have also suggested that protection of image may prevent highly able teens from asking for help, even when in considerable distress. Even in response to severe bullying (Peterson and Ray 2006), they may assume responsibility for resolving interpersonal difficulties themselves, also investing great mental energy in trying to make sense of cruelty and to make changes in themselves in order to avoid

harassment. On the other hand, some individuals ask for help easily, even to the extent that dependence affects academic achievement negatively (Rimm 2008).

Perfectionism

Perfectionism has also been associated with giftedness. Scholars have disagreed as to whether perfectionism exists on a continuum or whether labeling behaviors as perfectionism is inherently negative, with self-criticism, inability to enjoy endeavors, preoccupation with mistakes, and reluctance to take reasonable risks reigning (Greenspon et al. 2000). Neumeister and Finch (2006) noted that self-driven perfectionism is likely to reflect secure attachment to parents, a positive view of self and others, nonauthoritarian parents, and high standards for self. Socially prescribed perfectionism is associated with insecure attachment and fear of failure, reflecting the notion that self-worth and others' approval are tied to achievement. Based on their study, they suggested that strategies focus on replacing a potentially entrenched fear of failure with desire for achievement. Dweck's (2002) extensive work on self-beliefs about ability and goal orientations has emphasized that some highly capable students have doubts about their ability, based on a fixed, rather than malleable, notion of intelligence, and are reluctant to venture into unknown academic and other territory when not sure of success.

Differentiation, Multipotentiality, and Real Versus Ideal

Other characteristics with implications for how adolescents with exceptional ability experience their giftedness include possible distress over discrepancies between the ideal, which they are capable of envisioning, and the real, as reflected in the media and in their immediate environment. In addition, these teens may also have difficulty differentiating themselves from high-functioning parents, with implications for identity, career, and social development (Peterson 2008b). Even having potential to be successful in multiple careers, representing the controversial concept of multipotentiality (Achter et al. 1997), may raise the specter of loss and grief related to decisions about college majors and career direction, since that means leaving other options behind. Last, adolescents who are gifted may have been concerned about a future career since primary grade levels. Even at that stage,

career-oriented discussions can focus on positive employment-related behaviors, interests, and what "career" means. These discussions should be common during middle and high school, not necessarily about "making a choice," but to continue raising self-awareness of interests, personality, and personal needs and values, all of which likely have bearing on career satisfaction (cf. Hébert and Kelly 2006).

Characteristics of Giftedness Misdiagnosed as Pathology

A final area of concern related to characteristics is that they may be misdiagnosed as pathology at any age, including during adolescence. While individuals who are gifted can indeed have disorders that affect their well-being, Webb et al. (2005) noted that, when counselors and psychologists are not familiar with literature related to giftedness and do not recognize effects of interaction between high ability and school environments, behaviors reflecting asynchronous development and intense reactions to various stimuli can be inappropriately viewed as meeting criteria for disability or disorder. When adolescents present with apparent depression and anxiety, for instance, underlying issues may be related to giftedness.

The Overlay of Giftedness

Need for Support

Concerns of adolescents who are gifted, especially those who are high achievers, may not be recognized. It is important for significant adults to be aware that, even though they wear a façade of invulnerability, all gifted students probably worry about the future, need support, want to be taken seriously, want to be known as more than just performers, are sensitive to family tension, and may feel stressed, angry, socially inept, discouraged, and maybe even depressed (Peterson 2009a). In one study (Peterson et al. 2009b), high-achieving high school graduates said they wished their teachers and parents had understood that school stress, sensitivity, family stress, and social struggles were challenging. Overcommitment to activities and heavy loads of advanced courses were more stressful than major negative life events. Findings about the self-concept of underachievers have been inconsistent. For example, McCoach and Siegle (2003) found differences between achievers and underachievers in attitudes toward

school and teachers, in motivation and self-regulation, and in goal valuation, but not in academic self-concept.

Biased Adults

Educators, including school counselors, may have attitudes about giftedness that interfere with building relationships with adolescents with high ability and providing support during high stress (Peterson, 2006b). Adults may follow impulses to compete, to be “one-up” with humor or knowledge, or to “put them in their place.” These adults may also feel inferior intellectually or be affected by lingering negative memories of their own adolescent experiences with or as highly capable adolescents. On the other hand, being in awe of students with extraordinary ability or being preoccupied with performance or nonperformance can preclude seeing them holistically and as developmentally complex, perhaps with unique and troublesome challenges. Parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors may live through a student’s academic and other successes, with those and their own dreams appearing to be more important than the student. It may therefore be difficult for the adolescent to live in the present moment, without being preoccupied with the future.

A Factor of Resilience

Intelligence is routinely noted as an important factor of resilience, the ability to survive adversity with positive outcomes. Additional contributors to resilience during adolescence are good problem-solving skills, the ability to gain the attention of others, optimism and a vision of a meaningful life, being alert and autonomous, having a positive self-concept, having positive role models outside of the home, being proactive, and not blaming self for family problems or taking responsibility for correcting family dysfunction (Higgins 1994). Cognitive strength may help adolescents who are gifted cope with their discrepant levels of development, their sense of differentness, and a poor fit in the classroom and with the peer culture, which may have continued unabated from early school years. When discouraged, they can benefit from information related to resilience and inevitable changes over the life span (Peterson 2009a).

High Achievers and Underachievers

Not much is known about the subjective experience of high and low academic underachievement for

adolescents with high ability. Varying definitions and identification methods may have contributed to contradictory conclusions and confusion about even what characterizes underachievers, a complex and particularly idiosyncratic population. However, some clinicians and scholars have explored these experiences, including differences, and have suggested that how each experiences development may differ.

Comparisons. Findings in several studies of adolescent and early-adult development point to potential for change in academic motivation and underscore the importance of support for high-potential underachievers. In a 4-year, post-high-school study following 14 adolescents at risk for poor outcomes because of depression, severe underachievement, or extreme family conflict, Peterson (2002) found that achievers and underachievers were similar in outcomes. Most important, a convergence of two or three task accomplishments (e.g., identity, direction, mature relationship, autonomy, and resolution of conflict with parents) was associated with academic motivation and satisfaction with life. Some extreme underachievers had graduated from college with a good academic record, after accomplishing all tasks of interest. Resolution of conflict with parents was always part of the convergence. Achievers, including two National Merit finalists, had not accomplished those tasks and were struggling with direction. A retrospective Peterson (2001) study found the same convergence, followed by similar academic changes, when examining successful adults who were once adolescent underachievers. Having a role model and peers who were achievers was also a theme, and “feistiness” in difficult circumstances characterized females. In another retrospective study of former underachievers Emerick (1992) found that out-of-school interests, personal changes, and being able to pursue topics of interest were among factors associated with reversing underachievement.

Peterson and Colangelo (1996) studied the school records of 150 high school students who were identified as gifted, of whom 30% were academic underachievers. They found that 91% of males graduating as underachievers were underachieving in grade 7, that 20% became achievers prior to graduation (though final grade point qualified as underachievement), and that 87% of underachievers went to college. When achievers became underachievers for at least a semester, their decline in grades was not as pronounced as when

underachievers' grades fell. The researcher speculated that achievement "habits" help achievers self-correct. The difference in mean college-aptitude test scores was only seven percentage points, perhaps the result of underachievers' fewer advanced courses, not more lower-level courses.

In a follow-up study (Peterson 2000), 52% of underachievers (versus 83% of achievers) had 4 years of college, and 41% had done better academically in college than in high school. The researcher speculated that complex, developmental factors might be involved in reversal, and that motivation to achieve academically can change as life circumstances change and as maturation occurs. Collectively, in response to an open-ended question about challenges after high school, 61% of all participants mentioned something related to development of autonomy during those late-adolescent years – for example, leaving home, being responsible for self, and gaining emotional independence. Academic concerns were second – for example, perfectionism, pressure to excel, time management, adjusting to academic rigor. Nearly one-third were not sure at all about career direction at college graduation. Therefore, it should not be assumed that either high ability or high achievement means strong career direction. High school grades were indeed associated with success in college, but were only modestly related to sureness of direction 4 years later. Another interesting finding was that high school achievers and underachievers were similar in their self-reported life satisfaction 4 years later.

Identity development. Clinical reports have underscored that both achievers and underachievers want to be known as more than simply performers or nonperformers. For both, adult interest in activities outside of the classroom can offer important support and connection. For those who feel a loss of identity after leaving elementary school, that kind of interest may help them to feel known at school (Peterson 2009a). Both may struggle with incorporating the idea of giftedness into their identity, and high ability has indeed been associated with active exploration of identity (Erikson 1968). However, the self-image of high achievers may be based on giftedness and performance, perceived to be somewhat vulnerable. High potential and advanced development likely interfere with full

social acceptance, and they must deal with mixed societal messages and others' high expectations (Coleman and Cross 2001). Especially if they have not taken risks to explore the self, they may not be secure about "Who am I?"

In contrast, the risk-taking involved in some underachievers' active exploration may contribute to intense internal or external conflict with parents. They may also be invested heavily in social or talent areas (Rimm 2008). Underachievers may or may not have low self-esteem, but if they are not investing in academic challenge, they are less likely to receive positive feedback about academic competence. With cognitive ability that allows keen awareness of others' expectations, some underachievers may be paralyzed by them.

Career direction. Both may struggle with direction, but high academic achievement ensures that gates to the future are not closed due to a poor academic record. However, they tend to have direction earlier (Peterson 2000) and sustain career paths over time (Lubinski et al. 1996). Underachievers may lack career goals or have goals that are not related to college. They may aspire to higher education after finding direction and accomplishing other developmental tasks (Peterson 2001, 2002).

Maturity in relationships. In her rare study of adolescent females, Nice (2006) noted that bravado in connection with independence and serious romantic relationships kept significant adults at arm's length for underachieving female adolescents at a time when they particularly needed guidance and support. Energy was focused on filling relational needs, with relationships tending to be more toxic and less egalitarian than those of their achieving counterparts.

Autonomy. High achievement may not mean autonomy, since a focus on academic work or talent areas may preclude financial and personal independence for many years. Depending on what is contributing to their low academic performance, underachievers may or may not be more independent.

Twice-Exceptional Students

Adolescents with both exceptional ability and diagnosed or undiagnosed learning or other disabilities have internal as well as external asynchronies and are discussed as "twice-exceptional" in the scholarly literature. They must come to terms with the fact that they

have both great strengths and great weaknesses (Olenchak and Reis 2002). Because intellectual strengths can often compensate, to some degree, for a disability, these students may miss services meant to address needs at both ends of the ability spectrum, possibly precluding affirmation for giftedness and explanation of classroom difficulties. Students with high spatial intelligence may struggle in verbally oriented classroom work (Silverman 2002).

Potential Counseling Issues

Much of the research related to giftedness has been done with adolescent subjects. Inconsistent results have meant that there is no convincing empirical evidence that they have greater or fewer counseling needs than others. In fact, comparative studies have generally found similarities between gifted and general-population groups in regard to psychological well-being, depression, coping with stressors, bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation, for example (Neihart 1999). However, Grobman's (2006) work suggests that having great power and attention during childhood and adolescence because of extreme intellectual ability or prodigious talent has developmental and other implications, especially as adolescents move into young adulthood. In addition, high ability does not preclude high-impact negative life events. Normal developmental milestones may be delayed or particularly complex because of posttraumatic stress related to some form of trauma (Peterson 2010), including being bullied (Peterson and Ray 2006b). Any of these issues, when they occur among highly able adolescents, warrant the attention of counselors and psychologists. Career counseling can also be helpful when lack of direction affects well-being and motivation for academic work (Hébert and Kelly 2006).

Affective Curriculum

Adding a focus on social, emotional, and career development to programs for students with giftedness has received increasing attention (e.g., VanTassel-Baska et al. 2009). A broad-based affective curriculum can affirm highly able adolescents and connect them meaningfully with intellectual peers, regardless of achievement level. In semi-structured small-group discussion about nonacademic aspects of adolescence,

these highly able students can be grouped together in order to foster trust that others can understand them (Peterson et al. 2009a). Other components include infusing affective aspects into core academic classes (VanTassel-Baska 2009) or including speakers, panels, field trips, and career shadowing in poorly understood professions (Peterson), bibliotherapy and film (e.g., Hébert 1991), and mentoring (Hébert and Olenchak 2000).

These activities enhance self-awareness and facilitate skill development related to emotionally expressive language, for example. They generate interpersonal connections through discovery of common ground related to developmental tasks and underscore that adolescents are likely to have increasingly more intellectual and interest peers available as they move along in education. Affective curriculum can "make sense of" and normalize feelings, behaviors, and experiences. Specific challenges can also be addressed, especially in small-group discussion: identity, stress, bullying, loneliness, boundary-setting, emotional lability, sexual and other relational aggression, changes in family constellation, cyber safety, high expectations from self and others, and concerns about social and emotional adjustment to college, for example.

Being proactive with these strategies may help adolescents navigate the complex social and academic world they enter at each stage of education and when family and personal difficulties arise. Such components help adult mentors to be aware of risk factors; meet highly able students in the present, instead of through a future lens; focus on needs; frame "giftedness" more holistically; and acknowledge developmental challenges. An affective curriculum can provide important psychoeducational information about universal aspects of development. Invested adults may actually give little attention to these, and students with impressive gifts and talents may not have opportunity to discuss them, given their own and others' emphasis on cognitive strengths and on performance or non-performance. Discussions can combat arrogance and elitism, reminding participants of their own and others' humanity. Skills learned are likely to help these adolescents later as partners, spouses, parents, and employees (Peterson 2009a).

Potential School-Related Concerns

Classroom Frustration

Various aspects of classroom interaction, including pace, vocabulary level, and level of abstraction and complexity, can be frustrating for highly able students, particularly when accelerated or college-preparatory classes are not yet available (Peterson 2006a). Adults understandably assume that students with exceptional ability are bored when curriculum is not differentiated and therefore refer to boredom when academic needs are being discussed, regardless of achievement level. Boredom has indeed been discussed in pertinent literature (Kanevsky and Keighley 2003; Saunders 2007). However, with adolescents it is important to explore what the term actually means, since a learning disability, new homework demands, leaving a favorite teacher behind and perhaps experiencing departmental instruction for the first time, having a learning style that fits poorly with a teaching style, having creative impulses squelched, or having no friends in a class, for example, may be issues. Because use of the term can imply teacher deficiencies, it may not be effective when advocating for altered curriculum. Depending on the teacher and methods used, some students with considerable ability and high motivation may feel comfortable without significant differentiation. Others need major accommodations, including various types of acceleration. Students with giftedness are often able to relate comfortably with older individuals, and that ability, in addition to learning preferences, interest, and other personal characteristics, may affect the success of domain-specific and grade-level acceleration, as well as early entrance to college (Rogers 2002).

Underachievement

For a variety of reasons, underachievement may become entrenched early in middle school (Peterson and Colangelo 1996). Important to consider, however, is that a more, faster, and different curriculum is not what all high-ability students need or want at a particular stage of development. Open-endedness in assignments, acknowledging and being receptive to divergent thinking, and access to outside-of-classroom resources can be helpful for many. Low-achieving adolescents with exceptional ability may need differentiation more urgently than some high achievers if they are considering dropping out of school, if language

limitations make reading small print in large textbooks discouraging, if home situations affect attendance or are not conducive to doing homework, if there is no support at home for future aspirations, if behavior at school is problematic, or if earlier trauma has become a new issue in adolescence. Unfortunately, even when identified as gifted, students probably need to fit a program, instead of the program accommodating and addressing developmental needs of diverse students. Students representing non-dominant-culture groups may be uncomfortable and frustrated in one-size-fits-all programs (Moore et al. 2005). They may not thrive on more intense or more rapid curriculum, competitive activities, and packed daily schedules, but they could benefit from adjustments that would help them to progress, help them to feel supported, provide social access to intellectual peers, and help teachers affirm and nurture their ability. Adults who show genuine interest in underachievers' world and who maintain a nonjudgmental, strengths-focused (including non-academic) posture when interacting with them can provide crucial support and keep communication open (cf. Peterson 2009a).

Conclusion

All adolescents, regardless of ability level, face a similar array of developmental tasks. Though the idea that adolescents with exceptionally high abilities have a qualitatively different experience of adolescent development remains somewhat controversial, this discussion was based largely on clinical and empirical literature asserting that their experience is different. This highly idiosyncratic population, labeled "gifted" under the assumption of universal agreement on what that construct reflects, defies sweeping generalizations. Rapid information processing, sensitivities, intensities, and asynchronous development may all have impact on developmental task accomplishment during adolescence, as well on the experience of development, regardless of school achievement level, home context, socio-cultural heritage, and interpersonal skills.

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Goal Structures: Their Role in Promoting Early Adolescents' Peer Relationships and Academic Achievement

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Overview

There is considerable debate about the positive or negative effects of early adolescents' peer relationships on academic achievement. This essay strives to clarify this issue by showing how *goal structures* – or the way students' goals are linked to each other – affect whether early adolescents' peer relationships are positively or negatively associated with academic achievement. Specifically, this essay reports meta-analytic evidence on 148 independent studies comparing the relative effectiveness of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures in promoting early adolescents' achievement and positive peer relationships. These studies represented over 8 decades of research on over 17,000 early adolescents from 11 countries and 4 multinational samples. As predicted by social interdependence theory, results indicated that higher achievement and more positive peer relationships were associated with cooperative than competitive or individualistic goal structures. Also as predicted, results showed that cooperative goal structures were associated with a positive relation between achievement and positive peer relationships. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

There is considerable debate about the positive or negative effects of early adolescents' peer relationships on academic achievement. On the one hand, research suggests that junior high and middle schools have failed to meet students' need to belong and maintain positive peer relationships, resulting in disengagement

and lower achievement (Eccles et al. 1991). On the other hand, research also suggests that while some peer relationships promote achievement, others encourage disinterest and, in some cases, obstruct optimal achievement (Steinberg et al. 1996). This essay strives to clarify this issue by reporting meta-analytic evidence showing how *goal structures* – or the way students' goals are linked to each other – affect whether early adolescents' peer relationships are positively or negatively associated with academic achievement.

Early adolescence (ages 12–15 years) is an ideal age to study the relation between achievement and peer relationships because, at a time of rapid pubertal change, early adolescents also experience increasing desire for autonomy, increasing focus on peers and social acceptance, and increasing self-consciousness (Wigfield et al. 2006). While not all early adolescents have difficulty during this period, for many these changes create significant distress. Particularly at risk of negative outcomes are disconnected and alienated students (Wentzel and Caldwell 1997), and positive peer relationships have been shown to serve protective functions (Juvonen 2006).

Following social interdependence theory (Deutsch 1949; Johnson and Johnson 1989), the basic premise of this essay is that cooperative and competitive goal structures differentially affect the relation between achievement and peer relationships, the former creating the conditions under which one enhances the other and the latter creating the conditions under which one obstructs the other. The essay is divided into four parts. In part 1, key terms are defined and social interdependence theory is introduced. Meta-analytic evidence for the role of goal structures is then presented, with part 2 providing a brief overview of the meta-analytic method and part 3 summarizing findings. Finally, in part 4, discussion focuses on the theoretical and practical implications of goal structures for early adolescents' achievement and peer relationships.

Goal Structures and Social Interdependence Theory

Definitions

Goals, achievement goals, and social goals. Historically, the term “goals” has increasingly subsumed other motivational constructs such as “needs” and “motives”

because, at a general level, they are all concerned with the desired outcomes toward which people are working (Anderman and Wolters 2006). Examples of school-related *achievement goals* include mastering subject matter or meeting an achievement standard such as earning an “A,” a 100% on a test, or striving for a 4.0 GPA (Urdu and Maehr 1995). Examples of school-related *social goals* include gaining approval from others, making positive personal relationships with peers, belonging (i.e., feeling included, liked, respected, accepted, supported), and being dependable and responsible (Urdu and Maehr 1995).

Goal structures. In this essay, goal structures are defined in relational terms, meaning goal structures exist between students rather than within (e.g., goal orientations; Ames 1992) or in contextual “goal-related messages” (e.g., classroom goal structures; Ames 1992). In relational terms, goal structures define the type of social interdependence linking students' individual goals to each other. The next section clarifies what is meant by social interdependence.

Social Interdependence Theory

Social interdependence exists when individuals' goal attainment is affected by the actions of others. There are three ways that social interdependence may be structured (Deutsch 1949; Johnson and Johnson 1989). First, *positive interdependence* (i.e., cooperative goal structures) exists when individuals perceive that they can reach their goals if and only if the other individuals with whom they are cooperatively linked also reach their goals. When goals are structured cooperatively, individuals tend to seek outcomes that are beneficial to all those with whom they are cooperatively linked. Second, *negative interdependence* (i.e., competitive goal structures) exists when individuals perceive that they can obtain their goals if and only if the other individuals with whom they are competitively linked fail to obtain their goals. When goals are structured competitively, individuals tend to seek outcomes that are personally beneficial but detrimental to others' goal attainment. Third, *no interdependence* (i.e., individualistic goal structures) exists when individuals perceive that they can reach their goal regardless of whether other individuals attain or do not attain their goals. When goals are structured individually, individuals tend to seek outcomes that are personally beneficial without concern for others' efforts to achieve their goals.

Promoting achievement. Social interdependence theory predicts that cooperative goal structures will result in higher achievement than will competitive or individualistic goal structures. Since cooperative goal structures tend to result in promotive interaction (thus providing the assistance, information, and resources needed to achieve their mutual goals), while competitive and individualistic goal structures result in oppositional or no interaction respectively, it may be expected that cooperative goal structures will result in higher achievement than will competitive or individualistic goal structures.

Promoting positive interpersonal relationships. Social interdependence theory also predicts that cooperative goal structures will promote more positive interpersonal relationships than competitive or individualistic goal structures. According to Deutsch's (1949) original theorizing, when goals are structured cooperatively, success in achieving one's goals results in a positive cathexis (i.e., emotional investment) toward others' actions that promoted one's success. This positive cathexis is then transferred to others as individuals, which results in more positive relationships. In contrast, when goals are structured competitively, failure to achieve one's goals results in a negative cathexis toward others' actions, which is then transferred to others as individuals, resulting in dislike and rejection. Finally, when goals are structured individually, the feelings generated by success or failure to achieve one's goals tend not to transfer to other individuals.

Linking achievement and interpersonal relationships. According to Deutsch's (1985) *crude law of social relations*, cooperative goal structures result in a benign spiral in which promotive interaction patterns enhance goal achievement, which, in turn, results in more positive interpersonal relationships. Importantly, positive interpersonal relationships then provide the basis for continuing cooperation, which increases achievement, more positive interpersonal relationships, and so forth. In contrast, competitive goal structures result in a destructive spiral in which obstructive interaction patterns decrease goal achievement which, in turn, results in less positive (or more negative) social relationships. Further, negative social relationships provide the basis for continuing competition, decreased goal achievement, more negative social relationships, and so forth.

Overview of the Meta-analytic Approach

Given the debate about the positive or negative effects of early adolescents' peer relationships on academic achievement, Roseth et al. (2008) undertook a meta-analysis to evaluate social interdependence theory's account of the way cooperative and competitive goal structures differentially affect the relation between achievement and peer relationships. Meta-analysis differs both substantively and procedurally from conventional narrative reviews in that it provides an objective, scientific method of statistically integrating findings from independent studies (Cooper and Hedges 1994). Thus, in comparison to conventional narrative reviews, meta-analysis provides readers with specific, objective criteria for evaluating the validity of a literature review's sampling procedures, inclusion criteria, coding, and data analysis.

Sampling Procedures

In order to be as inclusive as possible, the Roseth et al. (2008) meta-analysis sought to include all available studies (e.g., published and unpublished studies in journals, books, dissertations, theses, and technical reports, as well as conference papers) comparing the impact of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures on academic achievement and positive interpersonal relationships among early adolescents. In order to locate as many primary studies as possible, Psych INFO and ERIC online databases were searched using keywords: *cooperative learning, peer teaching, peer tutoring, small group learning, and collaborative learning*. Other sources of primary studies were also searched, including existing bibliographies, conference papers, dissertations, and unpublished manuscripts. Relevant organizations and researchers were also contacted for possible unpublished studies. These sampling procedures yielded 1,413 manuscripts.

Inclusion Criteria

To be included in the meta-analysis, the manuscripts identified above were then evaluated against the following criteria: (a) participants were middle school-age children, (b) the study specifically dealt with the relationship between social interdependence and the dependent variable, (c) the study contained quantitative measures of the dependent variable and the study reported sufficient information to calculate an effect

size, (d) the study reported sufficient information to make conclusions about the relative effectiveness of different goal structures compared to a control group, (e) and the targeted subject matter was academic. In all, 129 manuscripts met the criteria to be included in this meta-analysis, yielding 593 effect sizes from 148 independent studies. (See Roseth et al. 2008, for a complete referenced list of included studies.)

Coding Study Characteristics

Descriptive variables coded in the meta-analysis included (a) publication mode; (b) sample characteristics such as age and gender; (c) group composition, including group size, ethnicity (homogeneous, heterogeneous), and cognitive ability (high, low); and (d) study characteristics, including treatment duration, academic subject area, and whether the cooperative condition was pure or mixed (combination of cooperative and competitive or cooperative and individualistic). Studies were also coded for quality of methodology, including the level of randomization used to assign participants to conditions, how well the control condition was defined, whether experimenter, teacher, and/or curriculum were controlled, curriculum effects were controlled for, and whether the adequacy of the implementation of the experimental and control conditions was verified. Summing scores across these five design characteristics, studies were classified as being low quality if they had a score of 9 or less, medium quality if they have a score of 10–12, and high quality if they had a score of 13–16.

Effect Size Calculations and Analysis

Finally, sufficient information was also coded to calculate effect sizes for each achievement outcome variable. Specifically, in every study in which sufficient data were reported, effect sizes (ESs) (i.e., standardized mean differences between treatment and comparison conditions) were calculated so that a positive ES indicated a favorable outcome for the treatment-intervention group. To ensure the independence of ESs and to avoid giving advantage to studies with larger numbers of outcome variables, each ES was also weighted by the inverse of its variance, following recommended practice suggesting that studies with large samples provide more reliable estimates of the population ES (Cooper and Hedges 1994). For ES analyses, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002) was used to explore between-study variation and to construct explanatory

models using both theoretical and nontheoretical (e.g., methodological quality) variables.

Summary of Meta-analytic Findings

Early Adolescent Sample Characteristics

Taken together, the 148 studies included over 17,000 early adolescent participants from 11 countries and 4 multinational samples. For socioeconomic status, 9% ($n = 14$) of the studies involved student samples with mixed economic profiles (i.e., of working, middle, and upper class), while 81% ($n = 119$) of studies used homogenous middle-, and/or upper-class samples and 10% ($n = 15$) included only lower-class samples. For ethnicity, 25% ($n = 37$) of the studies reported using samples with some ethnic heterogeneity, while 75% ($n = 111$) of the studies reported using homogenous ethnic samples. For ability composition, 82% ($n = 122$) of the studies included heterogeneous ability groups and 18% ($n = 26$) used homogenous ability groups. For gender composition, 79% ($n = 118$) of studies used mixed-gender groups while 19% ($n = 29$) used same-gender groups. These numbers suggest that the majority of studies employed heterogeneous grouping strategies, as recommended in the literature (Johnson et al. 1998).

Primary Study Characteristics

The 148 studies spanned 8 decades of research, with the majority of studies (45%, $n = 67$) reported during the 1980s, 22% ($n = 33$) during the 1990s, 18% ($n = 27$) during the 1970s, 9% ($n = 14$) during the 2000s, and 4% ($n = 6$) during the 1960s or before. The majority of studies were based in the United States (73%, $n = 108$), followed by Canada, Greece, and Israel (all with $n = 6$). Other primary study characteristics included:

- Treatment duration – The largest percentage of studies (30%, $n = 44$) compared treatments for a month or longer (i.e., 30–60 days), while roughly equal numbers (18–19%) lasted for 1–4 weeks.
- Research settings – The majority of studies (54%, $n = 80$) used intact classrooms, followed by academic settings (36%, $n = 54$), and laboratory settings (9%, $n = 14$).
- Academic subject area – Studies focused on language arts (23%, $n = 34$), social studies

(13%, $n = 19$), math (19%, $n = 28$), and science (16%, $n = 24$). A large percentage of studies also incorporated multiple academic subjects in their designs (23%, $n = 34$).

- Publication outlets – 78% ($n = 115$) of studies were found in peer-reviewed journals, 10% ($n = 15$) in technical reports, 7% ($n = 11$) in Ph.D. dissertations, and less than 4% in books ($n = 2$) and unpublished manuscripts ($n = 5$).
- Sample sizes – Study sample sizes varied from less than 15 to 1,080, with approximately 77% ($n = 114$) using samples greater than or equal to 30 students ($n = 13$ not reporting).
- Methodological quality – Using the trichotomous index of methodological quality, 33% ($n = 49$) were classified as having low validity, 40% ($n = 59$) as moderate validity, and 27% ($n = 40$) as high validity.

Academic Achievement

As predicted, cooperative goal structures (i.e., positive social interdependence) were associated with 0.46 standard deviation increase in achievement over competitive goal structures (i.e., negative social interdependence). Cooperative goal structures were also associated with 0.55 standard deviation increase in achievement over individualistic goal structures (i.e., no social interdependence). As for the differential effect of competitive and individualistic goal structures on achievement, the estimated weighted mean ES was positive but nonsignificant (i.e., the ES was not statistically different from zero). When low-quality studies were excluded from the analysis, cooperative goal structures were associated with 0.57 standard deviation increase in achievement over competitive goal structures, and 0.65 standard deviation increase in achievement over individualistic goal structures. [Figure 1](#) summarizes results for achievement across comparison groups.

Positive Interpersonal Relationships

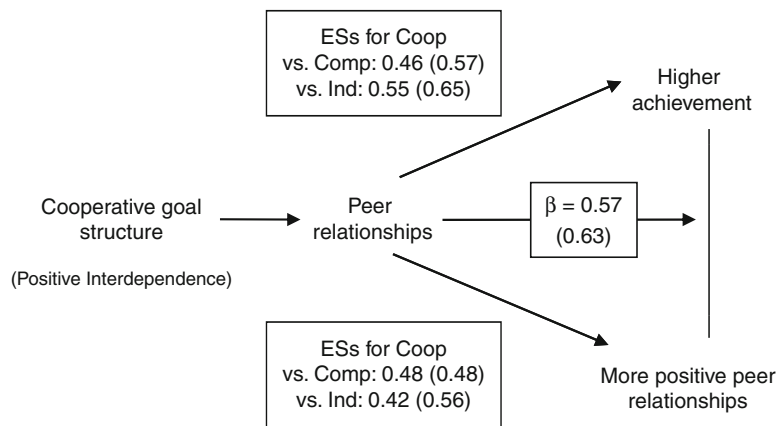
Results also supported hypotheses regarding the impact of different goal structures on positive interpersonal relationships. Specifically, cooperative goal structures were associated with 0.48 standard deviation increase in positive interpersonal relationships over competitive goal structures. Cooperative goal structures were also associated with 0.42 standard deviation

increase in positive interpersonal relationships over individualistic goal structures. As for the differential effect of competitive and individualistic goal structures on positive interpersonal relationships, the estimated weighted mean ES was positive (0.03) but nonsignificant. When the low-quality studies were excluded from the analysis, cooperative goal structures were associated with 0.48 standard deviation increase in positive interpersonal relationships over competitive goal structures, and 0.56 standard deviation increase in positive interpersonal relationships over individualistic goal structures. [Figure 1](#) also summarizes results for positive interpersonal relationships across comparison groups.

Differential Links Between Achievement and Positive Interpersonal Relationships

To evaluate the extent to which positive interpersonal relationships predicted achievement, the estimated mean ES for achievement was regressed on the estimated mean ES for positive interpersonal relationships. Given a nonsignificant difference between cooperation-competition and cooperation-individualistic comparison groups, ESs across both the competition and individualistic comparison conditions were aggregated. This step increased the sample size (and therefore power), as the regression analysis required that a primary study provide ESs for both achievement and positive interpersonal relationships. In all, the sample included 17 different studies reporting ESs for both achievement and positive interpersonal relationships.

As predicted, results showed a strong, positive correlation between positive interpersonal relationship ESs and achievement ESs. Specifically, the significant standardized coefficient $\beta = 0.57$ indicated that a one unit increase in positive interpersonal relationship ES was associated with an average increase of 0.57 units of achievement ES. In this sample, this means that approximately 33% of the variation in achievement was accounted for by positive interpersonal relationships. Further, when the low-quality studies were excluded from the analysis, results showed that the positive correlation between achievement ES and positive interpersonal relationships ES actually became stronger. Specifically, after removing low-quality studies, the standardized coefficient, $\beta = 0.63$, indicated



Goal Structures: Their Role in Promoting Early Adolescents' Peer Relationships and Academic Achievement. Fig. 1 Summary of results for cooperative goal structure. *Coop* cooperative goal structure, *Comp* competitive goal structure, *Ind* individualistic goal structure, *ESs* estimated effect sizes, β = standardized correlation coefficient

that a one unit increase in positive interpersonal relationships ES was associated with an average increase of 0.63 units of achievement ES. In this sample, this means that approximately 40% of the variation in achievement was accounted for by positive interpersonal relationships. Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the effect size estimates and the estimated correlation between positive interpersonal relationships and achievement.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications of Goal Structures for Early Adolescents

This essay reviewed meta-analytic evidence for the relative impact of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures on early adolescents' academic achievement and positive interpersonal relationships. Most relevant to the debate about the positive or negative effects of early adolescents' peer relationships on achievement, meta-analytic evidence was also reviewed regarding the differential effect of cooperative and competitive goal structures on these outcomes. Findings have important implications for theory and practice alike.

Academic Achievement

First, meta-analytic evidence showed that, for early adolescents, cooperative goal structures produced higher achievement than did competitive or individualistic goal structures. This finding validates social

interdependence theory and corroborates the results of previous meta-analyses (Johnson and Johnson 1989). Middle school is a fresh start for early adolescents, providing the opportunity for them to engage academically and to begin to build the knowledge and the record of performance necessary to do well academically in high school, take advanced courses, be admitted to the university of their choice, and eventually to have the career opportunities they desire. Thus, a primary responsibility of teachers is to ensure that students are academically engaged in their classes and integrated into the academic programs of the middle school. Students who do not become academically integrated are at risk for dropping out of high school or being relegated to special programs that do not provide the optimal educational and career opportunities. Put simply, the meta-analytic evidence suggests that the more teachers structure goals cooperatively (as opposed to using competitive and individualistic goal structures), the higher early adolescents' achievement will tend to be and the more they will tend to be academically integrated into the school.

Positive Interpersonal Relationships

Second, meta-analytic evidence showed that, for early adolescents, cooperative goal structures produced more positive interpersonal relationships than did competitive or individualistic goal structures. This finding validates social interdependence theory, and also corroborates the results of previous meta-analyses

(Johnson and Johnson 1989). Positive interpersonal relationships are an indicator of social integration into the middle school, which from the early adolescent perspective, may be the most important aspect of middle school. Making friends, fitting in with the other students, and being popular are all of great concern to most early adolescents making the transition from elementary to middle school. This is also the age at which adult-type relationships begin, especially with the opposite sex, and early adolescents are typically concerned about their adult-type relationships getting off to the right start. High-quality peer relationships also affects behavior in the middle school, as positive relationships tend to be related to appropriate behavior in schools (e.g., academic competence, involvement, self-esteem) and lower levels of negative behavioral patterns (e.g., violence, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, depression) (Wigfield et al. 2006). In short, healthy adolescent development depends on students developing positive *and* constructive peer relationships and the meta-analytic evidence suggests that the more teachers structure goals cooperatively (as opposed to using competitive and individualistic goal structures), the more positive students' peer relationships will tend to be and the more socially integrated students will tend to become.

Differential Links Between Achievement and Positive Interpersonal Relationships

Third, meta-analytic evidence showed that, for early adolescents, there is a strong positive correlation between positive relationships among students and student achievement. This finding has important implications for numerous theories, including social interdependence, distraction/conflict, and group cohesion theories.

Social interdependence theory predicts that successful goal achievement results in liking for those who promoted one's success. Deutsch's (1985) crude law of social relations then hypothesizes that liking can lead to promotive interaction. However, prior to the Roseth et al. (2008) meta-analysis there was little evidence that positive interpersonal relationships will in fact increase achievement. The meta-analytic results provide such evidence, indicating that cooperative goal structures are associated with a benign spiral in

which successful goal achievement leads to increased positiveness of relationships among group members, which in turn leads to greater achievement, and so forth. As illustrated in Fig. 1, cooperative goal structures also result in promotive interaction among group members, which results in members achieving and, in turn, in a positive cathexis toward the actions of groupmates that promoted one's success. This cathexis is generalized to the other group members as individuals, and the resulting positive interpersonal relationships result in increased promotive interaction and even higher achievement. The meta-analytic results reviewed in this essay provide some validation of this model by demonstrating that, for early adolescents, cooperative goal structures result in higher achievement and more positive interpersonal relationships than did competitive or individualistic goal structures. In addition, the results provide some validation of Deutsch's crude law of social relations by showing that the greater the positive interpersonal relationships, the higher the achievement. Said differently: results support the view that positive interpersonal relationships are not only one of the *results* of cooperation, but may also be one of the *processes* contributing to higher achievement.

Distraction/conflict theory views friends as distractions that create a conflict between attending to achievement and one's relationships (e.g., Baron et al. 1978). Friends are considered to be "social impairments" in achievement-oriented situations and, thus, the more positive the relationships with classmates, the greater the attentional temptation and the less students will tend to achieve. However, meta-analytic results fail to support this prediction, showing instead that when students' goals are structured cooperatively, positive relationships tend not to be distractions interfering with students' achievement.

Group cohesion theory predicts that a relationship exists between positive interpersonal relationships and achievement only if the group norms promote achievement (Festinger et al. 1950). Specifically, if the group is achievement oriented, then the more members of a cohesive group will tend to achieve academically. However, if the group is nonachievement oriented, then the more members of a cohesive group will tend *not* to achieve academically (e.g., Clasen and Brown 1985; Steinberg et al. 1996). One interpretation of the

meta-analytic results reviewed in this essay is that class norms encourage achievement more when early adolescents' goals are structured cooperatively than competitively or individualistically.

Practical Implications

The results of this study also have important implications for educators of early adolescents and for middle schools. When early adolescents become disengaged from school, it represents both a failure for the middle school and a developmental disadvantage for the individual student. Doing well in school significantly increases a student's opportunity structure while doing poorly restricts future opportunities. Engagement in school is largely determined by academic integration and social integration. When teachers use competitive or individualistic goal structures, academic and social integration tend to be separated and form competing goals. Likewise, when teachers focus only on academic learning, social interaction tends to be relegated to hallways and lunchrooms. However, the results of this study indicate that when teachers structure students' goals cooperatively, both academic and social integration may take place simultaneously. It has often been suggested, therefore, that schools deemphasize competitive and individualistic work and promote cooperative learning so that students' efforts to achieve would be perceived as prosocial and beneficial for other students (Juvonen 2006). When student goals are structured cooperatively, students are required to interact while working on academic assignments, thus building relationships while making academic progress. And, as the meta-analytic results reviewed in this essay suggest, the more successful students are in building high-quality relationships with each other, the more they may achieve. Life transitions, such as the transition from the elementary school learning climate to the middle school learning climate, are easier when one is relating successfully to other people (Juvonen 2006).

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Goals

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Overview

Personal goals shape thoughts, emotions, and behavior. In a continuous and iterative process, the goals individuals set for themselves and the experience of goal pursuit guides personal development and defines the image they have of themselves. Similarly, the perception of personal identity and self informs the goals they choose to pursue. This process is of particular importance in adolescence when establishing identity and independence are key developmental tasks. Studying adolescent goals can therefore reveal important insights into the lives and developmental pathways of youths.

Key Definitions

Goal Content

Personal goals are the states that individuals desire to attain or become, to maintain, or to avoid. For example, friendship goals may take the form of “making new friends,” “maintaining current friendships,” or “avoiding losing a friend.” The description of the image or state that an individual strives to achieve is often referred to as *goal content* (Austin and Vancouver 1996). End-states that a person wishes to move toward, such as gaining a high school diploma, are referred to as *approach* goals. End-states that a person wishes to move away from, such as failing high school, are referred to as *avoidance* goals (Carver and Scheier 1999). Goals can also be delineated according to the source of their motivation. Goals that are *extrinsically motivated* are aimed at gaining positive appraisal from others or other external rewards or consequences. Examples include material wealth, appearance, or social recognition goals. Goals that are *intrinsically motivated* are carried out as they are inherently interesting and enjoyable and are not conditional upon external

reinforcement. These goals are often aimed at personal growth or learning, satisfying interpersonal relationships and optimal physical health (Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996).

Adolescents generate personalized goals within the framework of culturally and socially accepted developmental tasks related to this period of the life span. The age-specific goals of adolescents therefore differ from those of adults. Developmental tasks widely attributed to adolescence include establishing autonomy from parents, determining an educational or occupational pathway, developing mature interpersonal relationships, and a personal ethical code to guide socially acceptable behavior (Havighurst 1953). Consequently, adolescents commonly report goals in the domains of *school*, for example, “pass my exams” and “do my best at school,” *future education and occupation*, for example, “complete university” and “choose a profession,” *social relationships*, for example, “have more respect for my parents” and “stay in touch with friends,” *personal development*, for example, “gain self-confidence” and “always be myself,” *physical health and appearance*, for example, “eat healthily” and “lose weight,” and *leisure activities*, for example, “do fun things in my free time” (Massey et al. 2009a). Although adolescent goals generally fall into these broad categories, the set of goals that each adolescent endorses is highly idiosyncratic and is shaped by characteristics of the individual and the environment in which pursuit takes place (Massey et al. 2008). Individual factors that might influence choice and pursuit of goals include gender, age, ethnicity, prior experiences, personal resources, and motivation. Environmental factors that might influence choice and pursuit of goals include family, peer groups, educational and national institutions, culture, and the political situation. These individual and environmental factors interact in their influence on adolescent goal setting and pursuit, so that for example, the extent to which the goals of girls and boys conform to gender role expectations is likely to be dependent upon the culture in which they live.

Multiple Goal Pursuit

When pursuing a goal, the current state is compared to the desired state and a perceived discrepancy between these two stimulates goal-directed action (Carver and Scheier 1990). In the case of approach goals, a discrepancy reducing loop is initiated, and in the

case of avoidance goals a discrepancy enlarging loop is initiated. The thoughts and actions employed to reach personal goals are referred to as *goal processes* (Austin and Vancouver 1996). These include setting goals, planning means of achievement, monitoring progress, and if necessary modification of either the means of pursuit or the goal itself. There are often numerous ways to pursue and achieve the same goal. For example, the goal of losing weight may be achieved by increasing physical activity or by restricting calorie intake or both. Each individual will devise their own means to achieve their specific goals according to their knowledge, skills, and the opportunities afforded to them. In addition, at any one moment in time an individual is typically attempting to achieve numerous goals simultaneously. Multiple goals are suggested to be interrelated in a hierarchical network ranging from high-level self-defining goals to low-level behavioral goals. High-level goals are abstract descriptions of how the person wants to “be” while associated lower level goals are concrete descriptions of what the person has to “do” to achieve that desired state (Carver and Scheier 1999). Realization of lower level goals therefore serves to promote achievement of the related higher level goal. For example, a girl may endorse the high-order goal of being socially accepted. This goal might be served by many subgoals such as spending time socializing with friends, maintaining an attractive appearance, and getting good grades at school. In the same vein, pursuit of one goal may promote achievement of other goals. For example, spending time exercising may promote progress in maintaining an attractive appearance as well as promoting progress on the goal of being physically fit. These goals are said then to be congruent or aligned. Conversely, spending time exercising may hinder the goal of spending time socializing with friends. These goals are then said to be in conflict with one another and achievement of one or both is likely to be impeded. Other sources of impediment to successful goal attainment are internal and external obstacles. Internal obstacles may include a lack of the necessary skills or knowledge while external obstacles may include a restrictive environment or lack of resources. For example, social goals may be impeded by a lack of confidence (internal obstacle) or by parental constraints (external obstacle). Impediment to goal pursuit caused by such obstacles is often referred to as goal frustration, hindrance, or disturbance, and is

associated with experience of negative affect (Massey et al. 2008, 2009a, b).

Goal-Related Emotion

Goal frustration is just one example of how goal pursuit is closely tied to, and interacts with, the experience of emotion. For approach goals, progress toward reducing the discrepancy between the current and desired state generates positive affect. For avoidance goals, enlarging the discrepancy between the current state and the “anti-goal” generates positive affect. A lack of progress toward approach goals or away from avoidance goals generates negative affect. The congruence between the expected and actual speed of progress is also of importance, for example if an overweight teen wishes to lose 20 kg at a rate of 3 kg a month, then a loss of “only” 1 kg is likely to be unsatisfying or disappointing.

Not only the valence but also the nature of emotion is suggested to depend on the type of goal pursued. Approach goals are related to a continuum ranging from elation when attained to depression when failed. Avoidance goals, on the other hand, are related to a continuum ranging from contentment/relief when attained to anxiety when failed (Carver and Scheier 1999). Similarly, the source of motivation for goal pursuit has been shown to influence psychological well-being. Pursuit of extrinsically motivated goals is related to higher psychological complaints and lower well-being while pursuit of intrinsically motivated goals is related to lower psychological complaints and higher well-being in youths (see Massey et al. 2008).

Emotion is not only influenced by the type of goal pursued, but also by experiences during goal pursuit. The occurrence of frustration to successful achievement of goals has been found to be related to lowered psychological well-being and physical symptoms such as headache in adolescence (Massey et al. 2009a, b). Obstruction to successful goal pursuit necessitates a response such as reassessing the importance of the goal, choosing alternative means of goal pursuit, reprioritizing, postponing, or adjusting the goal, or relinquishing the goal altogether. Disengaging from impossible to achieve goals and reengaging in new attainable goals has been shown to be particularly adaptive for psychological and physical well-being in adolescents and young adults (Miller and Wrosch 2007; Wrosch et al. 2003). Disengagement from an unachievable goal requires withdrawing effort but

also withdrawing commitment to the goal. When commitment to an unattainable goal is not relinquished, this may lead to rumination which in turn is suggested to be a key component of depression.

Goal setting and pursuit have been shown to influence the emotional experience, however, existing emotional or affective states also in turn influence these processes. Mood disorders such as depression and anxiety have been found to influence the type of goals adolescents set and the way they pursue them (see Massey et al. 2008). For example, adolescents with depressive symptoms report fewer approach goals and plans, and a greater number of avoidance goals and plans compared to nondepressed adolescents. In fact, many cognitive processes such as specificity of planning, estimation of likelihood of success, attribution of success or failure, and perception of control appear to be colored by mood. However, recent research has suggested that low mood or dysphoric symptoms among adolescents may serve to signal the need to disengage from unattainable goals and thus may serve an adaptive self-regulatory function (Wrosch and Miller 2009). The ability to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new achievable goals has been found to increase during adolescence, and this improvement was in turn related to a decrease in depressive symptomatology (Wrosch and Miller 2009). These authors argue that goal disengagement may be a particularly important process during this period as some of the goals adolescents set for themselves are likely to be unrealistic. Similarly, in the process of establishing identity, many possible selves may be considered and “tried on” but ultimately discarded. Disengagement must be balanced against sufficient persistence when desired goals are difficult but attainable. Premature disengagement would negate the potential to experience positive affect and mastery upon goal attainment. The self-regulatory skills of goal persistence and disengagement therefore appear to be important processes in adaptive goal pursuit and psychological adjustment during adolescence.

Populations Generally Studied/ Sources of Data

Adolescent goals are most commonly studied in the school setting. Youths who are not in main stream education may therefore be underrepresented in research, for example, adolescents who have dropped

out from school, have psychological or behavioral problems, have a chronic illness, disability, or learning difficulties, and those who are institutionalized or incarcerated. A limited number of studies have investigated goals among incarcerated youths or high-risk youths and those with a chronic health condition [see Massey et al. (2008) and Schwartz and Drotar (2006) for reviews]. In these difficult-to-reach populations, samples are often small, which limits power and generalizability. Furthermore, findings may not be generalizable beyond the study population due to the specific nature and limitations of the situation or a given illness. However, because school-based research cannot necessarily be generalized to all youths, goal research in alternative settings and among hard-to-reach groups is essential in order to gain insight into the lives of otherwise marginalized youths.

Another issue to consider when studying adolescent goals is the boundaries assigned to the concept of adolescence. Some studies include youths as young as 10 while others might consider adolescence to coincide with the teen years (i.e., from 13 years old). Is there an age or developmental stage at which independent goal pursuit starts to develop? The upper age limit is also disputable. When does one become an adult? Should this be defined by the legal age of adulthood, by biological or cognitive maturation, or by achievement of certain life tasks or goals? The majority of studies on adolescent goals are school-based, and thus include high school students up to graduation (18 or 19 years old). This often neatly coincides with the legal definition of adulthood; however, development and maturation are likely to vary greatly within any given cohort. Researchers need to define their target age group according to their specific research questions.

Major Theorists

Among the plethora of self-regulation theories that incorporate goal-like constructs (for a review see Austin and Vancouver 1996), a number of specific theories have most commonly been applied to the study of adolescent goals. According to each theoretical approach, key researchers can also be identified who have conducted influential research in the field of adolescent goals. For a more general overview of the major theorists, such as Bandura, Carver and Scheier, Emmons, Ford, Higgins, Karoly, and Little, who have made significant contributions to the broader self-

regulation theory, the reader is referred to Austin and Vancouver (1996), Baumeister and Vohs (2004), Karoly (1993), and Moskowitz and Grant (2009). The description of theories and key theorists below is by no means exhaustive but offers a brief overview of some of the main work done specifically in the area of *adolescent goals* to date.

Firstly, the Life Tasks model, which has its roots in personality theory, has been pioneered by Nancy Cantor and colleagues (e.g., Cantor 1990, 2000). Cantor's work has particularly focused on how people adapt to the social environment and social interaction. Life tasks are conceptualized as the daily problems people attempt to solve and the strategies they employ to do so. These "problems" or tasks are determined by a shared understanding of social and cultural norms regarding appropriate behavior for each developmental stage in life. Many life tasks relevant to the period of transition from childhood to adulthood have been delineated such as independence, identity, academic performance, and intimate relationships. Cantor categorizes these broadly into achievement and interpersonal life tasks. Similarly, Nurmi (2004) pairs it down to the two "broad challenges" of production (education and occupation) and reproduction (social and intimate relationships). These normative life tasks form a broad scaffolding within which individuals generate personalized tasks or goals according to their personal needs, situational affordances, and the sociocultural climate (Cantor 2000).

Secondly, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory is based on the idea that goal pursuit is driven by motivation to satisfy the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci and Ryan 1985, 2000). Understanding of the psychological needs driving goal pursuit is essential in understanding the "what" (content) and "why" (process) of goal pursuit. Psychological needs are defined as "innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being." Satisfaction of these needs is suggested to be essential for healthy development and mental well-being. The need for competence and autonomy are of particular interest in the study of adolescence as developing independence from parents and establishing identity are key developmental tasks of this period. The need for competence and autonomy is said to be the driving force behind intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated behaviors

are inherently interesting or enjoyable and carried out without external rewards or reinforcement. Goals that are intrinsically motivated are therefore autonomous and self-determined. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are those conditional upon external consequences, contingencies, or valuation and are therefore controlled. Situational conditions which undermine autonomy and competence, such as introduction of external rewards, are suggested to undermine intrinsic motivation. Consequently, locus of control shifts from being internal to external as behaviors are perceived as increasingly controlled.

Self-Determination Theory postulates that a crucial socialization process is the *internalization* of external values, standards, and norms and incorporating them into the self-concept. Assimilation of these extrinsically motivated behaviors allows them to become self-regulated and self-determined. Internalization can occur in varying degrees ranging on a continuum from external (controlled by external contingencies), introjected (internally regulated but not assimilated into the self), identified (assimilated into the self but behavior is still dependent upon external contingencies) to fully integrated regulation (assimilated into the self-concept thus behavior is self-determined and self-regulated). Pursuit of autonomous, intrinsic, or internalized extrinsically motivated goals has been shown to be related to improved learning, adjustment, and coping. Similarly, evidence suggests that pursuit of extrinsic goals, such as financial success, is related to lower psychological well-being and greater physical symptoms among late adolescents (Deci and Ryan 2000; Kasser and Ryan 1993; Kasser and Ryan 1996).

Thirdly, Future Orientation theory has developed and applied to adolescence by Jari-Erik Nurmi and colleagues (Nurmi 1991; Seginer 2009). Nurmi defines three cognitive processes involved in future orientation: motivation (what a person strives to achieve), planning (how they plan to achieve it), and evaluation (the extent to which they expect their plans to be realized). These processes are influenced and informed by life span development, knowledge, skills, self-concept, and attributional style. While this model focuses on the cognitive representation of future orientation, Seginer (2009) describes a future orientation model that incorporates a motivation component (value, expectancy, and control) which feeds into both cognitive representation (hopes and fears) and behavior

(exploration and commitment). Nurmi has subsequently placed future orientation within a broader theory of adolescent socialization in which four interlinking processes are defined: channeling, selection, adjustment, and reflection (Nurmi 2004). Channeling refers to influence of the interpersonal and sociocultural environment in shaping, facilitating, and restricting youths' goals. Relevant sources of influence include parents, family, teachers, and peers but also the educational, political, and economic environment. Selection refers to the construction of personal goals and devising strategies for pursuit within the boundaries of environmental possibilities and constraints. Adjustment refers to the process of adapting goals and strategies based on feedback regarding successes and failures during goal pursuit. Appraisal of success or failure depends upon the expectations and beliefs of the adolescent, as well as the coping strategies employed to deal with any setbacks. Reflection refers to the process of evaluation of goal pursuit efforts and achievement which informs the developing and malleable self-identity.

Finally, much research has been conducted among adolescents on possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986) by Daphna Oyserman and colleagues (Oyserman and Markus 1990). The focus of her work has been particularly in the areas of delinquency and academic outcomes. Possible selves are cognitive representations of what an individual "might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (Markus and Nurius 1986). In other words possible selves involve expected, hoped for, and feared representations of the future "self." Central aspects of this theory are that possible future selves (a) motivate and guide action toward these desired end-states providing a link between cognition and motivation, and (b) provide criteria against which the current self is evaluated. Possible selves allow visualization and consideration of oneself in a multitude of future roles and situations, elaboration of those most desired or feared, and contemplation of steps to achieving them. The desired end-state is strongly influenced by the social and cultural context.

Unique to this theory is the consideration of balance between hoped for (approach) and feared (avoidance) possible selves (Oyserman and Markus 1990). Possible selves are considered to be balanced when a hoped for or expected self is complimented or

balanced with a feared self in the same domain. For example, the hoped for self of "me graduating from high school" might be balanced with the feared self of "me dropping out of school." When this is the case, it suggests that the individual is aware of both the positive and negative consequences of their actions. Balance may also assist in choosing the most effective strategies to simultaneously approach the hoped for and avoid the feared for self. In addition, possible selves have been described as either self-enhancing or self-regulating. *Self-enhancing* possible selves are vague goals, which do not involve a specific or defined behavioral component but promote a positive image of oneself and the future. Conversely, *self-regulating* possible selves are specific goals which guide behavior thus providing a "roadmap" to achievement. Articulation of self-regulating goals rather than self-enhancing goals has been related to improve academic performance among adolescents (Oyserman et al. 2004).

Despite different theoretical underpinnings and foci, the self-regulation models outlined above all agree on a number of basic tenets: (a) goals give meaning and purpose to daily activities and struggles, (b) goals guide behavior, cognitions, and emotions, (c) personal and situational characteristics influence goal setting and pursuit, and (d) successful attainment of developmentally appropriate and intrinsically motivated goals is related to positive adjustment and well-being. Furthermore the unique contribution of each model adds to a greater understanding of adolescent behavior.

Measures and Measurement Issues

Because of the diverse theoretical underpinnings of studies on adolescent goals as outlined above, a variety of measures have been employed to discern what it is that youths value, prioritize, and strive for. Life tasks have typically been measured by eliciting a list of life tasks that the participant then (a) categorizes into life domains and (b) rates according to "meaning dimensions" such as importance, enjoyment, difficulty, control, initiation, stress, other's view, progress, challenge, time spent on them, ambivalence, conflict, extrinsic value, and desire to achieve satisfaction and avoid unhappiness (Cantor and Kihlstrom 1987). Factor analysis has suggested that these dimensions can be categorized into three conceptual groupings: difficulty, rewardingness, and outcome evaluation. Using this

type of assessment, Cantor and her colleagues have investigated age-graded life tasks such as negotiating romantic relationships, social integration, and participation, and the transition from high school to college among adolescents and young adults.

Another commonly used assessment tool using a closed-ended format is the Aspirations Index (Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996). Rather than spontaneously generating personal goals themselves, a predefined list of up to 32 goals is presented to participants. Similar to the procedure used by Cantor to rate life tasks, participants rate each item on importance and likelihood of attainment. The goal items can be clustered according to seven domains: self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, physical fitness, social recognition, appealing appearance, and financial success. Based on the tenets of Self-Determination Theory, the first four goal domains are suggested to reflect *intrinsic* goals while the latter three goal domains are suggested to reflect *extrinsic* goals (Kasser and Ryan 1996). This measure has been employed among both early and late adolescents (see Massey et al. 2008).

An assessment tool used to operationalize the concepts of the Future Orientation theory is the Hopes and Fears Questionnaire or Interview (see Nurmi 1991). The open-ended questions, posed either verbally or in writing, aim at eliciting personal dreams, hopes, goals, and plans as well as personal fears. The participant is then asked in depth about specific dimensions of these hopes and fears including knowledge, plans for realization, anticipated age of actualization (temporal extension), perceived control (internality), and associated affect. This measure has been employed among all ages of adolescence (ranging from 11 and upward). Rachel Seginer and colleagues have explored coding hopes and fears according to centrality, specificity, affective tone, thematic differentiation, and temporal extension (see Seginer 2009). Centrality refers to the salience of a domain reflected by how many goals are reported in that area, and the density in relation to the total number of goals reported. Specificity refers to the detail and concreteness of the goal. Affective tone refers to the ratio of hopes to fears. Thematic differentiation refers to the number of different domains in which goals are reported. Finally, temporal extension refers to the age at which the goal is expected to be attained.

Possible selves have been measured in a number of ways. For example, by assessing to what extent

predefined possible selves descriptions represent past, current, possible, probable, or future desired selves (Markus and Nurius 1986). Another method is to request adolescents to generate expected and feared selves for the coming year along with strategies used to attain these goals (Oyserman et al. 2006). The content of the goals is then coded by independent raters into categories. Goals can also be coded by independent raters according to balance between feared and hoped for selves within the same domain and the number and plausibility of reported strategies. This method in which researchers rate goals on certain characteristics is similar to that used by Seginer to rate hopes and fears. This assessment tool can be used from early teens and upward.

Various considerations should be taken into account when assessing an instrument used to measure adolescent goals. An important consideration is whether it is open or closed ended. Open-ended goal measures generate idiographic, personally relevant material. However, this type of qualitative data subsequently requires categorization and interpretation making comparisons between individuals difficult. Moreover, this method can be limited by social desirability, in other words adolescents may only report goals they perceive as being acceptable or as portraying a certain image. This type of qualitative data collection is often a prerequisite for developing standardized closed-ended measures. Using such closed-ended measures allows easier comparison between individuals and studies. It is essential however that closed-ended measures are carefully piloted so as to ensure content validity, cultural sensitivity, and acceptability among the target group. In other words, adolescents who complete the measure must be able to identify with and understand the items. In relation to this, goals can be an abstract concept not commonly used on a daily basis. The level of cognitive ability and development of the target group should therefore be taken into account when choosing or designing a measure. Simple language and use of concrete examples are recommended.

Another methodological consideration is the number of goals measured which depends on the research question and can range from one goal to an entire goal taxonomy. Studies may focus on, for example, exercise or school-performance goals. The advantage of this approach is gaining in-depth insight into the thoughts

and emotions associated with one goal such as difficulty, specificity, temporal extension, and experience of obstacles. The disadvantage of this approach is failing to consider how the goal interacts, confers, or conflicts with other goal pursuits. However, to assess the full range of an individual's goals is time and labor intensive. An example of a structured and coherent measure of multiple goals and associated appraisals is Brian Little's personal projects matrix.

Another measurement issue is the temporal span of the goals elicited ranging from short-term goals to be achieved in the coming weeks to long-term goals which may characterize the specific developmental period of the individual. For example, goals of adolescents typically do not extend further than the beginning of the third decade. Consequently, to a 13-year-old, a long-term goal may be to "get a well-paid job." In most cases, this will be achieved by the end of the second decade of life, although the definition of "well-paid" is likely to alter with age! In the future, it will be important to ascertain the psychometric properties of existing measures and to build on this to develop valid and reliable goal measures appropriate for adolescents.

Goal-Based Interventions

Currently, goal-based interventions designed specifically to improve adolescent outcomes are scarce. The handful that has been described in the literature, however, demonstrates encouraging results. Two examples are described below.

Possible Selves theory has successfully been employed to develop an intervention to improve self-regulatory behavior, academic outcomes, and mental health and well-being (e.g., Oyserman et al. 2006). The aims of this school-based intervention were to increase the salience of academic goals, to link them to new strategies for attainment, to give adolescents the skills to deal with setbacks, and to incorporate these goals into the self-identity. Participants were early adolescents with a low socioeconomic status, largely from ethnic minority backgrounds. The intervention was given over 12 sessions focusing on the importance of academic goals, consideration of successful role models and adult possible selves, positive and negative influences on goal pursuit, emphasizing that difficulties are not self-defining but part of a normal process, consideration of strategies for attaining academic goals, and developing a timeline for achievement. Sessions were

highly interactive to emphasize the normative nature of academic goals and difficulties in achieving them, and to strengthen the link between academic goals and social identity. Follow-up sessions involved parents and community members. Sustained increases in progress toward academic goals, academic initiative, and grades and decreases in depression, school absences, and misbehavior were observed over a 2-year period.

Another intervention based on goal theory is "Going for GOAL" (O'Hearn and Gatz 2002), which was developed by Danish to teach life skills to high-risk adolescents. This school-based intervention incorporates evoking dreams and converting them into goals that are positive, specific, important, and under their own control. Participants subsequently learn to break goals down into manageable steps by means of a goal ladder, consider possible obstacles to success, and how to solve these issues, reinforce success with rewards, consider and utilize social support systems, and to promote self-efficacy via identification of personal strengths. The program ran over the course of 10 weeks, with weekly modules being delivered in class by peer facilitators. It was hypothesized that delivering the intervention would have additional benefits for the peer facilitators. Participants were early adolescents from an urban, multiethnic, and low socioeconomic background. Significant improvements were found in knowledge and problem-solving skills among the participants and increased knowledge of life skills among peer facilitators, although no significant changes in locus of control were found.

Obvious similarities between these programs are the school-based setting and number of modules, the promotion of realistic goal setting, and consideration of difficulties and possible solutions. Other components are unique to each program such as sessions with parents and community leaders in the possible selves intervention and the use of peer facilitators and mobilization of the social support system in the Going for GOAL intervention. Further research is necessary to test which components have the greatest impact on outcomes and to what extent the effects can be sustained over time. Systematic development of evidence-based interventions with clear change objectives, selection of appropriate theoretical methods, pilot testing, and rigorous evaluation will greatly help to advance this area. These promising results among low socioeconomic status and minority youths suggest that

these goal-theory-based interventions are valuable tools for promoting academic achievement and well-being among underachieving or disadvantaged youths.

Gaps in Knowledge

Goal research can add insights into many long-standing issues surrounding youth development and socialization. Future directions for adolescent goal research include investigating the following:

- The development of goal striving: can stages of self-regulation skill development be discerned and are there self-regulatory markers of adolescent development?
- The interpersonal nature of self-regulation: the role of parents in shaping adolescents goals has received much attention, however the influence of siblings and peers on adolescent goal pursuit and attainment has yet to be fully explored.
- The influence of goal taxonomy on outcomes: to what extent can endorsing certain goals, such as those focused on education and career, be protective against risk behaviors and promote positive outcomes?
- The impact of stress and coping during adolescence on subsequent goal striving and long-term adjustment.
- Prospective, longitudinal research to assess causal relations between goal setting and pursuit on the one hand and outcomes such as well-being and academic performance on the other hand.
- The effectiveness and long-term benefits of goal-based interventions on outcomes such as school performance, risk/problem behaviors, health behavior change and psychological and physical well-being.

Exploring the above areas of research relating to adolescents' goals will help the field contribute even more to the understanding of youths' lives and developmental pathways.

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a tendency to associate hormonal changes with behavioral changes during adolescence, research has found that only a small effect of behavioral changes is attributable to gonadal-hormone levels (Spear 2000). Research now emphasizes potential complex bidirectional associations between gonadal hormones and adolescent behavior; and it is clear that the associations remain complex and effects multidetermined.

Cross-References

- [Adrenarche](#)
- [Menarche](#)
- [Puberty](#)

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Gonadarche

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Gonadarche refers to the earliest gonadal changes that mark the onset of puberty. The changes are due to an increase in response to pituitary gonadotropins, which leads to the growth of ovaries in girls and of testes in boys and to an increase in the production of the sex steroids, especially estradiol (an estrogen hormone) and testosterone. The first sign of gonadarche for boys is testicular enlargement; for girls, thelarche (the first signs of breast development); and growth acceleration are usually the first signs of gonadarche since ovarian growth cannot be seen directly. Typically, gonadarche occurs at approximately 9 or 10 years of age in girls; and boys experience it soon thereafter (Dorn et al. 2006). While adrenarche is sometimes associated with the onset of puberty, it is a process only associated loosely with puberty; gonadarche serves as the sign of puberty's onset. Although there is

Gossip

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Overview

Gossip is a pervasive social phenomenon in the lives of children and adolescents, yet it has received relatively little research attention. The little that is known about gossip, its functions, prevalence, and social correlates draws from a diverse literature, including anthropology, sociology, and psychology. This essay begins with a review of the definitions and descriptions of gossip and then focuses on the functions, significant, and structure of gossip in the lives of children and adolescents.

Definitions and Descriptions of Gossip

The word gossip originates from the Old English word *godsibb* meaning both “godparent” and an activity that one engaged in with close friends (Dunbar 2004).

Gossip used to refer to men's camaraderie as well as that of the women that gathered in the home awaiting the birth of a child. By the beginning of the 1800s, gossip had come to refer to idle talk, slander, and backstabbing conversation (Rosnow 2001). It also became a derogatory term used principally to refer to women (Rysman 1977).

Today, gossip typically connotes unflattering talk about the personal qualities or behaviors of another person, however trivial and nonessential. Gossip is also commonly considered a malicious or aggressive behavior; however, many scholars do not limit the definition of gossip to purely negative talk about absent third parties (Dunbar 2004; Eder and Enke 1991; Foster 2004; Gottman and Mettetal 1986; Levin and Arluke 1985; Pendleton 1998). Naturalistic observations of college students by Levin and Arluke (1985) reveal that only about a quarter of all talk about others who are absent is negative-evaluative. A quarter of this talk is positive, and the remaining is neutral or mixed in valence. Similar observations have been made about the gossip of preadolescent girls. Thus, this essay will refer to gossip as any talk about an absent third party. When reviewing research that has defined gossip as evaluative discussion of third parties, it will be noted.

Children begin to talk about others at a young age, soon after learning to speak (Fine 1977). Further, by middle childhood, youth are able to label talk about third parties as gossip, and generally think that gossip is unacceptable. Youth also make judgments about the reliability and veracity of gossip. They are more skeptical of information conveyed through gossip than from information shared first-hand, especially when there are contextual cues that the speaker may be unreliable (e.g., the speaker has motives to lie; information may have been heard incorrectly). However, although youth disapprove of gossip and are cynical about information conveyed through this means, they do not refrain from participating in it. For example, observations of preadolescent girls and their friends reveal that half of their conversations are comprised of gossip, most of which is talk about same-age peers (McDonald et al. 2007).

Comparisons of male and female gossip have only been done with adult or college-age samples (Leaper and Holliday 1995; Levin and Arluke 1985). Analysis of laboratory observations of college-aged friends' negative and positive gossip about familiar peers has found

that more of female friends' discussion was devoted to gossip, and more of it was negative, than that of male friends or cross-sex friends (Leaper and Holliday 1995). However, naturalistic observations of both groups and dyads of college students engaging in all forms of gossip, including positive, negative, and neutral gossip, found that men and women engaged in similar amounts of negative gossip (Levin and Arluke 1985). These discrepancies may be due to the context of the conversations that were observed. Women in the first study were talking with close friends, and, therefore, they may have felt more comfortable talking negatively about others. Gossip may be more likely to be negative-evaluative with friends because individuals may feel less inhibited and are more likely to speak freely. In groups, individuals may censor their evaluations because there is greater social risk in sharing negative opinions (Leaper and Holliday 1995). Both gender and contextual factors will be returned to later in this essay.

Functions of Gossip

Gossip may serve a variety of functions for individuals, relationships, and social groups. First, gossip is fun and entertaining to participate in. If stories are interesting, shocking, or funny, gossip may be a means to entertain peers (Baumeister et al. 2004). Certainly, sharing gossip, especially if done well, contains aspects of performance and may be a form of story-telling (Abrahams 1970). Observers of preadolescent gossip judge that about a quarter of all gossip is for entertainment and fun.

Second, gossip is a way to communicate evaluations about others' behaviors. In this way, negative gossip communicates disapproval and stigmatizes inappropriate behavior. Gossip also promotes "socially appropriate" behaviors and strengthens group norms (Eckert 1990; Foster 2004; Leaper and Holliday 1995). Through the communication of moral judgments, gossip serves as a mechanism through which individuals compare themselves to others and is a powerful means of social control. Relevant to childhood and adolescence, gossip is a way to learn about life and age-appropriate behavior as well as communicate and reaffirm norms while simultaneously managing impressions and reputations (Fine 1977). As children enter middle childhood and peer acceptance becomes a major goal, gossip becomes even more relevant and useful to understanding group norms and managing one's place within the peer group (Merten 1997).

Third, gossip may both be a signal of shared closeness as well as a way to increase intimacy among individuals. Generally, friends are more likely to gossip than acquaintances or non-friends (Blumberg 1972). Mutual trust, relationship security, and a shared social history are often necessary before individuals are willing to share their evaluations of others and for both partners to understand the subtleties of gossip (Abrahams 1970; Noon and Delbridge 1993). Additionally, gossiping with a partner communicates trust and that the relationship is valued (Derlega and Chaiken 1977). Mutual disclosure of opinions, especially if interaction partners agree, further intensifies feelings of intimacy within a relationship, and strengthens perceptions of similarity (Foster 2004; Gottman and Mettetal 1986). Further, gossiping about someone, especially negatively, may solidify a group or dyad, creating a “we vs. them” mentality (Gottman and Mettetal 1986; Wert and Salovey 2004).

The supposition that gossip may actually be a marker for intimacy, or actually increase intimacy between partners, has been supported through observations of preadolescent girls and their friends. Observed closeness and overall quality of girls’ friendships were found to be positively related to the proportion of their gossip about peers. Friendship quality was also related to the length of gossip episodes, the number of different peers who were discussed, and the proportion of gossip that was judged by observers to serve the function of increasing intimacy. Together these findings suggest that the more intimate girls feel with each other, the more gossip they will do, and that the activity of gossiping, itself, may also make them feel closer to one another. However, research that examines these processes longitudinally, which may better illuminate the causal relations between gossip and intimacy, is still needed.

Additionally, knowing interesting gossip may make someone an appealing interaction partner because it signals social knowledge (e.g., “being in the know”) and is a form of social capital. According to Parker and Seal (1996), children with friends are more likely to be nominated by peers as knowing interesting gossip compared to chronically friendless children. Gossip may make one a more attractive friendship partner by demonstrating that one is knowledgeable about the social sphere (Parker and Seal 1996). For example, laboratory observations of preadolescent girl friends

done by McDonald et al. (2007) revealed that a larger portion of the conversations of sociometrically well-liked girls and their friends was gossip and that these well-liked girls gossiped about more people than rejected girls and their friends. Well-liked girls and their friends were also more likely to talk about boys than were rejected girls and their friends, perhaps indicating that these girls had more contact with male peers or showed interest in boys earlier than rejected girls. Well-liked girls also engaged in more evaluative gossip than rejected girls. It is likely that youth with fewer social contacts are unlikely to have access to interesting gossip, whereas adolescents who have many friends and are liked by others may have more valued social information to share. Note, however, that there is no social advantage conferred on youth known to be “gossips” or those who constantly gossip behind people’s backs. Knowing how to gossip *appropriately* may be essential to avoid the possible negative social consequences of this behavior.

Although knowing gossip may have benefits, there are also social sanctions against participating in gossip (Kuttler et al. 2002). It is common to hear people chastise gossip, saying things like, “don’t talk behind people’s backs” and “if you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” Perhaps, this is because gossip is also a means to hurt and harm others. Indeed, in research focusing on child and adolescent peer interactions, gossip is typically grouped with other behaviors that are meant to harm others and their relationships, otherwise known as social or relational aggression (McDonald et al. 2007). From middle childhood into adolescence, greater consequences for overt aggression emerge, and thus aggression gradually becomes more covert with age. Youth begin to utilize behaviors that are more easily concealed, like negative gossip, to hurt others. Aggressive gossip can be used to manipulate social relationships and position within the status hierarchy. Spreading negative information about another person is a particularly effective way to hurt that individual because the target is not present to challenge the information and it is difficult to trace the information back to the source, protecting the initiator from retaliation. Further, being the subject of gossip, similar to being the target of other forms of social or relational aggression, can be quite hurtful and emotionally distressing for children and adolescents.

In conclusion, gossip may serve a variety of functions for children and adolescents. Gossip is interesting

and fun. Gossip also offers opportunities to learn about the morals and norms of the larger peer group and is also a way for individuals to bond and increase the intimacy (Fine 1977; Gottman and Mettetal 1986). There is also social power conferred on people who know and selectively share social information about others. And lastly, gossip is a means to aggress against others in a covert way, minimizing the chance of returned harm. The following section further examines the significance of gossip during childhood and adolescence.

The Significance of Gossip in Childhood and Adolescence

Scholars have suggested that gossip is a behavior that children and adolescents must master as part of becoming socially competent. Gossip appears so integral to social processes in middle childhood and adolescence that it may determine whether two unfamiliar peers “hit it off” (Gottman and Mettetal 1986). Based on intensive observations of female children and adolescents, John Gottman and Gwendolyn Mettetal (1986) hypothesized that gossip was a normal social interaction through which girls establish similarities and learn about each other, as well as themselves. They suggested that gossip in early childhood served to establish solidarity among peers and in middle childhood, gossip seemed to further the establishment of group norms. For example, in their observations, they noted that gossip helped to establish commonality between the girls through the establishment of shared opinions about others, shared common beliefs and norms, shared humor, and by also increasing self-disclosure between fellow gossipers. By adolescence, youth were observed to gossip in a more nuanced way, saying both negative and positive things about the same target. Also, adolescents used gossip as a way to discuss and problem-solve about issues in their individual lives, as well as to serve the earlier functions of establishing commonalities and group norms.

The Structure of Adolescent Group Gossip

Using naturalistic observations of adolescent groups in school, Donna Eder and Janet Enke (1991) analyzed the structure of evaluative peer gossip episodes. They observed that following an evaluative gossip initiation, a supportive statement or clarification from another

group member most often followed. Challenges or disagreements with the initial gossip statement were quite rare in adolescent groups. When challenges were made, they always occurred immediately after the first negative evaluation, before others had the opportunity to agree. Once evaluative gossip received support from other group members, challenges were nonexistent, perhaps, because when a supportive statement was made challenging the gossip changed from confronting one person’s opinion to (seemingly) confronting the collective evaluation of a group.

Eder and Enke (1991) also noticed that adolescents’ sociometric status, or how liked youth were, determined their role during group gossip episodes. Initiators of gossip were adolescents who had high- or mid-level status within the group. Additionally, challenging statements were only made by youth who were at an equal or higher social status to that of the initiator. Challenges were never made by individuals who were of a lower status than the initiator. Due to these dynamics, students who were not well-liked were unlikely to initiate gossip because there was more risk of being challenged; anyone above them in status could challenge their initiation. However, statements in support of the initial evaluation could be made by anyone in the group. Eder and Enke (1991) noted that these role constraints, along with the structural constraints discussed above, limit opportunities for disagreement within gossip episodes, and, perhaps falsely, increase youth perceptions of similarity and decrease the diversity of opinions that are shared within the group.

Future Directions in Research on Gossip

As mentioned earlier, there is a scarcity of empirical research on gossip, leaving much that is yet to be learned. In this section, three main topics for future inquiry are suggested. These include questions about gender, context, and individual and group differences.

Almost all of the empirical and observational work about child and adolescent gossip has focused solely on girls (McDonald et al. 2007). This is likely due to gossip being considered a traditionally female phenomenon. However, research with adults finds that both men and women participate in gossip, and may do so with equal frequency. Future research should examine the gossip of boys and girls in both childhood and adolescence. Only through empirical comparisons will differences

or similarities in male and female gossip behavior be evident. Do boys engage in as much gossip as girls and are the topics of their gossip similar or different? Do girls begin to gossip with greater frequency at an earlier age compared to boys? Does gossip serve the same functions for girls and boys?

This essay also reviewed some of the hypothesized features of gossip; however, it is likely that the primary functions of gossip vary by the context of the behavior. For example, gossip among friends may be more likely to increase intimacy. With unfamiliar peers, gossip may be a way to establish commonalities (Gottman and Mettetal 1986). In larger peer groups, it is likely that gossip may serve as means to be aggressive or solidify behavioral norms and group cohesion. Observational methods that examine how the same individuals gossip in different relational contexts may be particularly useful in understanding how the functions of gossip are tied to contextual factors.

Finally, research should continue to examine how individual and group characteristics are related to gossip behavior. Beyond the gender and sociometric status differences reviewed above, gossip may also vary by ethnicity, according to a study done by McDonald et al. (2007). African-American girls and their friends have been observed to gossip more and do more evaluative gossip compared to European-American girls and their friends. Gossip has been proposed to have greater utility for minority groups because it helps maintain group bonds, identity, and control group actions. Thus, gossip between African-American girls, as a minority group in the USA, may have greater value through the strengthening of in-group norms, bonding together, and reaffirming values. There are many other characteristics that may also relate to individuals' gossip behavior, such as age, the density of a person's social networks, or the importance placed on being liked or accepted by others. Further exploration about how individual characteristics may relate to gossip behaviors will only contribute to a more intricate, detailed understanding of gossip in the lives of children and adolescents.

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Goth Culture

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Overview

Acts of violence, suicide, and self-harm have been found among Goth teens. Family, friends, and even health-care providers are at a loss on how to relate to such adolescents. They are unsure what role they might play in addressing some of the psychosocial issues they encounter. Fear and confusion tend to be predominant emotions experienced when encountering Goth teens.

The Goth culture often attracts teens that are depressed, feel persecuted, have a distrust of society, or have suffered past abuse. They then surround themselves with people, music, web sites, and activities that foster angry or depressed feelings. As a result, they tend to have a higher prevalence for depression, self-harm, suicide, and violence than non-Goth teens.

Goth Youth and Problem Behavior

In the small town of Farmville, Virginia, a professor, her Presbyterian minister ex-husband, daughter, and a friend are brutally murdered by a young “Goth” man the family had recently allowed to stay in their house. Unsure how to handle their daughter’s fascination with the Goth culture and threats to run away, the parents allowed their daughter to invite this man, a man she met online, to fly from California and to move in with them. The parents even drove their daughter and friend to and from Michigan to attend a “Horrorcore” music weekend. Within the week, the family was dead at the hands of this young man (Potter 2009). In Toronto, Canada, “Johnathan” was stabbed and cut 71 times by his vampire-obsessed older brother, age 16, and two friends (Canadian Press 2005). The brother then called friends to come over stating that “blood is on tap.” These are only a few of the horrific cases that have occurred in the past few years associated with Goth activity. This is not to say that all or even most Goths are dangerous or at risk, but that for some, Goth activity may indicate deeper problems.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adolescents are the only portion of society in the United States that has not observed a decrease in mortality and morbidity during the past 4 decades (Christopherson and Jordon-Marsh 2004). The CDC has outlined six risk-taking behaviors by adolescents: unintentional injuries and violence, alcohol and drug use, tobacco use, risky sexual behaviors, poor diet, and lack of physical activity. All of these behaviors are prevalent in the Goth culture.

Society is faced with many questions regarding the impact being Goth may have on the health of the adolescent. What is being Goth? When is being Goth a fad and when is it destructive? Does being Goth put an adolescent at risk for certain health-care problems? What warning signs indicate that action should be taken? What actions should be taken? The purpose of this essay is to address many of these questions.

Being Goth: What Is a Teen Goth?

The Goth subculture is so diverse that it is difficult to define an average Goth teen. It has been shown that often adolescents gravitate to the Goth subculture in search of social acceptance among their peers (Voltaire 2004). Teens may turn to the Gothic subculture as a result of feelings of isolations, difficulties in school, or as they try to express their feelings (Hawton and James 2005). Some are victims of discrimination, abuse, and systemic ridicule (Voltaire 2004). It is not uncommon for a Goth teen to feel like a social misfit and possess a dislike for authority (Young et al. 2006). Goth teens often do not participate in extracurricular activities that involve sports or social clubs. Some just simply enjoy the fantasy found in role playing games, the clothing, the music, and the shock value they receive when walking among the mainstream. Many are nonviolent, passive, tolerant, and pacifistic, whereas, others can appear angry, depressed, and violent (Christopherson and Jordon-Marsh 2004; Young et al. 2006). They tend to possess above average intelligence and are often highly literate and creative.

There are many Goth subgroups with each wearing similar clothing and makeup, participating in specific activities, and enjoying certain types of music and art. Subgroups range from Romantic Goths to Vampire Goths. Risk factors vary based on the activities prevalent in each subgroup. Vampire Goths imitate characteristics of a vampire such as wearing fangs and pale

makeup, sleeping during the day, and roaming at night. Some actually drink human and animal blood. Certain subgroups tend to have more affinity for tattoos and body piercing, whereas, others experiment with sexual themes such as promiscuity and bisexuality (Voltaire 2004).

Psychosocial Problems

Goth teens have been found to be at risk for psychosocial problems such as depression, violence, self-harm, and suicide (Hawton and James 2005; Young et al. 2006). For some, these problems are the inherent reason the teen sought to be part of the Goth subculture. For others, the psychosocial problems tend to result or escalate as the result of participation within the culture. Regardless, the association with Goth-related activities does place the teen at greater risk for psychosocial problems. Specific risk-enhancing activities include listening to violent music, participating in rituals, visiting Goth-related web sites, and trying to depict the expected persona of the role (Martino et al. 2006).

Depression

Approximately 35–50% of adolescents experience depression during their teenage years (Christopherson and Jordon-Marsh 2004). Depressed teens tend to be attracted to the Goth subculture. They are allured by being able to associate with other individuals that feel disillusioned with or oppressed by society. They find support and understanding as they focus on the things that are wrong with their lives as well as the society that surrounds them. They seek peers with similar views; music that focuses on depressing and angry thoughts; and web sites that focus on the dark side of life (Martino et al. 2006). As they surround themselves with such hopelessness, they find it harder to fight off their feelings of depression.

It is often easy to spot depressed teens as they often exhibit a depressed affect. They tend to become angry, irritable, or tearful quite easily. Some have a preoccupation with suicide and death. These teens may suffer from either insomnia or hypersomnia and have decreased interest in activities they once enjoyed (Son and Kirchner 2000).

It is often difficult to determine the depth of the teens' depression, especially when they have become engaged in Goth activities. As a general rule, teens tend to have mood swings and hormonal shifts that

can be confused with depression. When compounded with involvement in a culture that focuses on morbid thoughts, it is harder to determine if the teen is indeed suffering from depression that requires intervention or if they are just acting in accordance with Goth expectations.

Self-Harm

Self-harming activities occur with between 7% and 14% of adolescents (Hawton and James 2005). In the Goth subculture, this number increases to 53%. Young et al. (2006) found that being Goth was the highest predictor of self-harm. Self-harm consists of piercing, cutting, scarification, scratching, scoring, burning, punching, and self-poisoning. It can progress to the point of suicide. Males tend to be more likely to self-harm than females.

Teens participate in self-harm activities for a number of reasons. For Goth teens, the high prevalence of self-harm can be related to trying to model their cultural icons or peers (Young et al. 2006). Like their Goth idols, they may use the cutting, scratching, and scoring to create patterns on their body similar to body piercings or tattoos. In doing the cutting, teens may choose to cut in distinct patterns. The “across the road” pattern consists of short cuts across the arm; “down the highway” consists of long cuts down the arm; and “dashing” consists of short deep cuts. In scarification, the teen inserts tattoo dye into scars that have been created with a knife. These scars can be random, in specific designs or with numbers or letters. Some teens do it themselves while others have it professionally done.

Self-harm can be a maladaptive method for coping with anger, anxiety, guilt, and frustration (Young et al. 2006). The teen may have various motives for the self-harm behavior including trying to show desperation to others, wanting to die, trying to impact the behaviors of others, making others feel guilty, numbing themselves, relieving tension, punishing themselves, or seeking help (Hawton and James 2005). Self-harm behaviors are often secretive and impulsive. Some teens that have a propensity for self-harm are drawn to the Goth culture with the belief that it is a group where they best fit.

Self-harm activities may be precipitated by difficulties with school, friends, or parents; bullying by others; low self-esteem; depression; or the awareness

of self-harm activities by others. The likelihood that a teen will participate in self-harm is increased if they have previously participated in self-harm activities. Other potential predictors include alcohol or drug abuse, personality disturbances, and social isolation (Hawton and James 2005).

Suicide

Between 20% and 40% of all adolescents are found to experience suicidal ideations. However, Young et al. (2006) found that 47% of those involved in the Goth subculture reported having attempted suicide. Being Goth was the single highest predictor of suicide when other adolescent subcultures were controlled for.

Many suicidal Goth teens come from environments where they have experienced family, social, and psychological problems (Hawton and James 2005). Some teens have been drawn into suicidal activities through the media and music they encountered. Many of the teen suicide victims listened to music that promoted violence and suicide for hours prior to committing suicide. Becoming aware of the suicide or suicidal attempts of others has also been shown to be a high predictor of suicidal ideations in teens.

The Goth subculture tends to attract teens that are depressed, have family or social problems, participate in self-harm activities, and experience feelings of hopelessness. These factors may predispose the teen to suicidal ideations and actions. There are many sources available to the teen fascinated with death. These include web sites, songs/musical lyrics, and other troubled individuals that provide directions on methods for committing suicide (Hawton and James 2005).

Violence

Teens often encounter various forms of violence, including bullying, rape, verbal abuse, and even homicide (Weir 2005). Homicide is the third leading cause of death for children between the ages of 5–14 years (Christopherson and Jordon-Marsh 2004). It continues to be one of the leading causes of death up to age 24.

Predictors of violence can include low or high self-esteem, poor conflict resolution, cultural norms, and media messages (Weir 2005). Teens that are predisposed to violence often have trouble accepting responsibility for their actions and blame others for the things that are wrong in their lives. Some have experienced humiliation, rejection, or bullying by peers. They

may have witnessed or experienced abuse. Other teens that are predisposed to violence may suffer from mental illness or drug and alcohol use. Some of these teens feel socially isolated and have had very little supervision at home (Facts for Families 2005).

Many of the teens that migrate toward the Goth culture have experienced these risk factors. They heighten their risk of violence by surrounding themselves with writings, art, movies, magazines, music, games, and internet sites that focus on violence and persecution (Martino et al. 2006). Some Goth teens are drawn to cult activities that focus on body mutilation, animal sacrifice, the drinking of blood, and sexual rituals. The examples at the beginning of this essay illustrate some of the homicidal activities that teen Goths have participated in. The teens involved with these horrific acts had aligned themselves with Goth groups and were known to listen to music that focused on violence and visit Goth web sites.

Identifying an At-Risk Teen

Just because teens dress in Goth attire does not mean they are at-risk. However, many such teens are at risk for depression, self-harm, suicide, and violence. Adolescence tends to be a time when teens go through many physical and emotional changes. As a result, it can be difficult to determine whether a teen is experiencing psychosocial problems that require intervention or is going through normal developmental struggles. Parents, teachers, and peers tend to interact with teens on a regular basis; thus they may be especially helpful in identifying at-risk adolescents. It has even been shown that many students actually reach out to teachers, parents, or friends before they engage in high risk behaviors such as suicide.

A major concern is to be able to distinguish the teen that is experimenting with a fad from the teen that is in trouble. Warning signs come in many forms. These may consist of changes in their appearance; how they inter with others; their art; the hobbies they pursue; and the activities they participate in.

Appearance

Many teens are drawn to the dress, jewelry, makeup, and tattoos of the Goth culture simply because they like the look. However, the change in the teen's appearance can indicate a need for concern. Goth teens tend to wear clothing that ranges from the lacey Victorian style

to the Nazi trench coats as worn by the teens involved in the Columbine School killings. The clothing often symbolizes the Goth subculture. The dark colors and more drab appearance can indicate a culture that attracts more depressed and angry teens than the lacy Victorian style or the colorful style of the Poseurs. In considering the clothing, it can be noted that the trench coats can serve a secondary purpose such as carrying weapons. Long sleeves can be used to cover body mutilation.

Often Goth teens are seen with specific jewelry. The jewelry they wear can give you insight into some of their views. For instance, the pentagon represents black or white magic with the top point for the spirit and the other four prongs for earth, wind, fire, and water. This might suggest that the teen has an interest in the occult and rituals. The upside down cross often seen on necklaces represents the antichrist or blasphemy against the Christian cross.

Much can be learned about the Goth teen based on the artwork depicted in their tattoos. The teen fascinated with death or violence may have a tattoo of a scene that represents violence or death. Three sixes or “FFF” stands for the beast or Satan.

Cutting and scarification needs to be addressed in much the same manner. It is important to first determine if the cutting or scarification is an art or an indication of self-harm. The designs will help address this. Second, it is important to determine if it is a behavior that cannot be controlled. If it is art, it will be displayed proudly, whereas, the teen may try to hide the angry cutting under clothing. In assessing the teen for body mutilation, it is important to remember that the injuries often occur on the arm opposite the teen’s dominant hand.

The teen’s facial affect can also give you an idea of the way they are feeling. Some will have a bland, depressed affect. With these teens, it is important to consider if depression is indeed a problem. Others have facial expressions that show anger. They also wear clothing that indicates anger and carry themselves in a forceful manner. These teens might have an underlying affinity for cruelty.

Changes in Interaction Style/Peers

One of the first things to consider with a Goth teen is who they are associating with. Are they part of the same social group but are trying out a new style or have they

severed ties with old friends and begun to associate with very different people? Are they developing friendships based on on-line interactions? In several of the cases described in the beginning, the teens had changed their social group to friends that were involved in questionable activities. It is important to find out if the new friends are from gangs or antisocial groups. Many times the teen in trouble becomes very mysterious about the people they are hanging out with. They may begin sneaking out and refuse to talk. They may make confidential phone calls. They may even run away to be with the friends.

It is also important to recognize a change in personality. Is the teen found to have angry outbursts or tantrums? Has the teen become a disciplinary problem at school? Is there a social agenda behind the outbursts? Are they angry at the world or establishment? Is the teen mean, assaultive, or brutal to other individuals or animals? Does the teen use abusive language? Does the teen make violent threats or talk of death and suicide? These could be indicators that the teen may be predisposed to violence.

Artistic Output: Writings/Artwork

Many teens display their feelings through their art, such as pictures, writings, or music. The troubled teens may have pictures they have drawn or painted that depict murder, suicide, or violence. It is not uncommon for the pictures to be bland in color with the exception of the bright red blood. The pictures may also include instruments of harm such as knives or fangs.

The writings of the troubled teen may depict anger, frustration, or the dark side of life. They may even write letters backward as in the “Devil’s Alphabet.” The writings could be a way for the teens to release some of their feelings or a way of outlining a plan they have. Their writings may be in the form of poems, music lyrics, short stories, or online communication.

Leisure Activities

Often the Goth teen is drawn to musical artists, web sites, books, games, and movies that focus on violent themes. The music they listen to may become very graphic and their tolerance for authority may be at a minimum (Martino et al. 2006). Many Goth teens listen to the music of Insane Clown Posse, Razakel, Stitch Mouth, Venom, Dark Funnel, Cannibal Corpse, Slipknot, King Diamond, and Marilyn Manson. The

music is filled with verses focusing on oppression, violence, murder, and suicide. It is not uncommon for major venues to provide their concerts without realizing the impact of the music. Parents, such as the family discussed at the beginning of the paper, willingly drive hours to take their children to these concerts. It is not uncommon to find sources of their music at a crime scene. The teens involved in the murders at Columbine had listened to such music for hours before they attacked the school. Similar music has been found playing at many suicide sites. Some of the lyrics even give direction of how to go about committing acts of violence. There are web sites such as "Horrorcore" that assist teens in writing their own music as well as connecting teens with others that have the same views.

Currently, there are many movies and TV shows that focus on the dark side of life. The "Twilight" movies and the HBO show, "True Blood," have been very popular with teens. As a result, many teens have taken on the Vampire persona. For most teens, this is a fun fad. For others, it has gone much deeper into Vampire cult activity where the teen has begun to live a life similar to that of a vampire. They have become obsessed with drinking blood, sleeping in the day, and wandering at night. In Hagerstown, Maryland, a 15-year old girl that had formed a Vampire Circle of blood drinkers and cutters had her father killed on Halloween (Davis 2008).

The Goth teen may be found to carry specific books such as the "Satanic Bible" or the "Book of Shadows." The Satanic bible consists of Satanic rituals and ideology. Satan is viewed as a symbol of struggle against a tyrannical God. Sexually immoral behavior is acceptable. The "Book of Shadows" is a diary that the teen keeps that often outlines their deep dark thoughts. Teens that have been involved in violent acts have had their plans outlined in their "Book of Shadows." The Goth teens may also carry a book of rituals that explain various activities such as how to set up a suicide site. This includes the direction to face, how to build a sacrificial altar, what objects to surround yourself with, and how to commit suicide. It is not uncommon to find a book of rituals or the Satanic Bible at a ritual suicide site.

"Gaming" has been an activity that has drawn many teens together. Some of the games that have become most appealing to Goth teens are Vampire: the Masquerade, Vampire: The Eternal Struggle, and Dungeons

and Dragons. These are a few of the "Live Action" fantasy role playing games often available to vulnerable Goth teens. These games are often played with cards or by rolling dice. At times, the participants dress in the attire of their character in the game. There have been a number of cases where the participants have moved from make believe to real-life activities.

Assessing the At-Risk Teens

In order to reach a troubled teen, it is important to develop a rapport of concern with a true desire to help. The teen should be approached in a manner that is free from judgment and open. The teen should be offered confidentiality that will stay in place unless there is a risk of harm for either the adolescent or others. The first step might be to express the awareness of changes that have been noticed in the teen's behavior and then seek the teen's input (Son and Kirchner 2000).

It would be important to consider conducting an assessment of the student's present physical and mental status. This assessment could focus on risk behaviors (i.e., drug and alcohol use, diet, use of blood products), current health issues, the impact being Goth might have on their life, feelings of depression, family dynamics, and any thoughts of harming themselves or others. It is important to find out why the teen is drawn to the Goth culture and the role of the culture in their life. The teen should be questioned about suicidal ideations or their desires to hurt others. It is important to find out if they have a plan for harm and access to weapons. The teens should also be assessed on whether they have hurt themselves or others in the past or know someone who has. In assessing the teen for self-harm, they should be asked if they have participated in behaviors such as scoring, cutting, or scratching. If they have, there is a need to find out whether the self-harm is an attempt at suicide, to create art, or an attempt to ward off pain (Hawton and James 2005). It is important to establish if the student has been bullied or feels like a misfit in school. It is also important to determine if the teen has a history of aggression or violence, threats, cruelty to animals, angry outbursts, or being a disciplinary problem (Facts for Families 2005).

It may be helpful to use assessment tools to determine the magnitude of psychosocial problems. These tools can be used to assess suicidal ideations, depression, and psychosocial well-being. Commonly used tools include the Children's Depression Scale (CDS),

the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI), the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), and the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ). These tools can be used to determine whether the teen is truly suffering from depression or suicidal ideations (Massachusetts General Hospital 2009). Some of these instruments are completed by teachers and parents as well as the teen.

If the teens refuses to discuss their feelings or becomes defensive, it would be appropriate to refer them to a health-care professional that works with such teens. If the threat of harm or violence is real, police or EMTs may need to be notified. These teens should not be alone until they receive appropriate care (Facts for Families 2005). Of most importance is maintaining the safety of those interacting in any manner with the teen.

Intervening with the At-Risk Goth Teen

When a teen is identified as being at risk, intervention may be needed. The family should be notified that their child is at risk and then be encouraged to seek the assistance of a health-care provider with expertise in dealing with such teens. Often it is not clear where to go for help.

Trained health-care professionals such as psychotherapists and primary care providers with expertise and a proven track record in working with teens are often the best place to start.

A health-care provider may be needed to address some of the medical issues that can impact the teen. For instance, conditions such as anemia, infection, drug use, hepatitis, thyroid conditions, and electrolyte imbalance might mimic depression (Son and Kirchner 2000). A primary care provider can run the lab work needed to rule out some of these medical concerns. Students that have participated in self-harm activities may need to have infections treated and tetanus shots updated. Due to risky activities, it may also be important to make sure the student has immunity against hepatitis (Hawton and James 2005).

It is important for the teen to have a safe nonjudgmental place to come to discuss their concerns and frustrations. It would be helpful for teens to have help in identifying positive opportunities for success. They would also benefit from help in finding positive role models. The teens should be assured that they do not need to harm themselves or others in order to get help.

Conclusions

Those involved with teens should be more than a passive observer regarding Goth issues. By providing an open door and access to support, they can prevent problems, address concerns, and utilize needed experts. It is important to keep in mind that some teens solely dress as Goths in order to fit in. Others may embrace the Goth identity as a means of escape and anger or even as a call for help. Behaviors can range from minor activities such as wearing Goth attire, coloring their hair, and listening to music. In contrast, Goth activities can be as destructive as self-harm, suicide, and violence. Those in relationships with teens are in a position that can really make a difference.

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Grade Retention: Effects on Academic and Non-academic Development

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Overview

This essay examines the effects of grade retention on students' academic (e.g., achievement, motivation, engagement, dropout) and non-academic (e.g., self-esteem, peer relationships, emotional adjustment) outcomes. Based on a generally consistent line of evidence dating back to the 1970s, it is concluded that the effects of grade retention are negative, with impacts more salient for academic outcomes than non-academic outcomes. However, the essay also points out that these negative effects must be interpreted in the context of numerous caveats and additional considerations. Encouragingly, rather than rely on grade retention, it is evident there are effective educational and policy responses that can assist young people's development through school, some of which are discussed herein.

Grade retention is the practice of retaining a student in the same grade for (usually) an additional year. It is typically implemented as a response to students' underachievement (predominantly), social difficulties, emotional and/or physical immaturity, and/or behavioral difficulties. The rationale for the practice is that by retaining students in a grade for an extra year, they have the opportunity to catch up with the curriculum and other students, or develop physically, behaviorally, emotionally, and socially. This essay examines the evidence on grade retention with particular focus on its effects on academic and non-academic outcomes during adolescence. According to Alexander and colleagues (Alexander et al. 2004), "being 'off-time' in school can cause problems at any age, but conditions

peculiar to adolescence, the onset of puberty, and the impending transition to middle school very likely heightens them" (p. 21). Grade retention is a practice that subsequently positions students as "off-time" throughout school. This essay examines the effects of this practice. It concludes by identifying some of the implications the evidence holds for practitioners, parents, and policy makers.

Grade Retention and Young People's Academic Outcomes

For at least the past 25 years, grade retention has been a commonly implemented response to academic difficulties (Jimerson 2004). Today, just as 2 decades ago, students are expected to move lockstep through the curriculum, mastering its key elements at the same point in life. To deal with a crowded curriculum and the attendant pressures of testing and accountability, schools deploy educational practice at a relatively rapid pace. To keep up this pace, teachers are directly or indirectly compelled to move on with the curriculum even if some students are experiencing difficulty keeping up (Alexander et al. 2004). There are numerous responses to help deal with students who fall behind – one of which is a structural response in the form of grade retention. This has prompted the question: What is the effect of grade retention on students' academic outcomes?

Research into Achievement, School Dropout, and Classroom Responses

It appears that the effects of grade retention on students' academic outcomes are predominantly negative – as demonstrated across a good deal of early work (e.g., Abidin et al. 1971 in relation to effects in elementary school; Holmes and Matthews 1984 in relation to effects in elementary and junior school; House 1989 in relation to policy effects; Jackson 1975 in an overarching review of evidence and literature; Smith and Shepard 1987 in a synthesis of research) through to more recent investigations (e.g., Hong and Yu 2007 in relation to elementary school; Jimerson 2004 in a meta-analysis of wide-ranging effects; Martin 2009, 2010 in relation to high school motivation and engagement; Silbergliet et al. 2006 in relation to the effects of the timing of grade retention; Temple et al. 2004 in relation to educational attainment).

The weight of evidence suggests that grade retention significantly predicts school dropout, lower

academic achievement, and lower post-school educational attainment (e.g., Fine and Davis 2003 in relation to enrolment in post-secondary education; Jimerson 2004 in relation to achievement; Jimerson et al. 2002 and Temple et al. 2004 in relation to school dropout). These negative effects appear to be stronger when students are retained in later grades (e.g., during adolescence), with relatively fewer negative effects for retention in the first 2 or 3 years of school (Alexander et al. 2004) – but with early advantages lost down the track (Temple et al. 2004; see also Holmes 1989). Negative effects of grade retention are even stronger for double repeaters, with an approximate 90% school dropout rate for students who are retained in a grade twice in their school life (Alexander et al. 2004).

Importantly, when juxtaposed with comparable low achieving students who are promoted to the next grade, retained students are more likely to drop out of school and perform poorly (Alexander et al. 1994; Temple et al. 2000, 2004). Critically, the gap for retained students widens when compared to younger students in their new grade (Temple et al. 2004). Furthermore, retention that involves educational intervention is also not apparently effective: compared to students who are promoted and receive intervention, retained students perform more poorly – suggesting that it is more effective to promote students and administer educational intervention (Temple et al. 2004). According to Temple and colleagues, “substantially more than retention and school-age intervention is needed to address the learning difficulties of these students” (2004, p. 58). In relation to other behaviors and responses in the classroom, it appears that retention is associated with inattentive, anxious, and disruptive classroom behavior (Pagani et al. 2001).

Research into Motivation and Engagement

With particular focus on academic motivation, engagement, and achievement, this author examined the effects of grade retention among a sample of just over 3,600 high school students (Martin 2009). This was an important addition to the literature in that a focus of the study was on academic motivation and engagement, factors not so extensively studied. Hence, while the bulk of research has focused on academic achievement and educational attainment (e.g., dropout), relatively less attention has been given to its role in

achievement motivation. Temple et al. (2004) cited achievement motivation as relevant to early intervention that might reduce grade retention practices and so it was important to understand how grade retention interfaces with various aspects of achievement motivation.

Using structural equation modeling (SEM), Martin (2009) found that gender significantly predicted retention such that boys were more likely to be retained/repeated (see also Hauser et al. 2004; Temple et al. 2004). Findings showed that retained students were significantly *lower* in self-efficacy, mastery orientation, valuing of school, persistence, positive intentions, academic buoyancy, homework completion, enjoyment of school, class participation, school attendance, and performance. Students retained in a grade were also *higher* in anxiety, failure avoidance, uncertain control, self-handicapping, and disengagement. Furthermore, in follow-up analyses it was found that the effects of grade retention were negative irrespective of the grade a student was retained, with no significant difference on the set of dependent variables as a function of grade retained (counter to Alexander et al. 2004).

In a second investigation of just over 3,200 high school students, using SEM Martin (2010) again examined grade retention effects on motivation and engagement, but this time included many more control factors such as ethnicity and ability and numerous interaction/moderation terms (e.g., gender \times ability, gender \times ethnicity, ethnicity \times ability). It also extended prior work by focusing on non-academic outcomes (discussed below). Results showed that grade retention was a significant *negative* predictor of academic self-concept and homework completion and a significant *positive* predictor of maladaptive motivation and weeks absent from school.

These findings are noteworthy because they represent the role of retention over and above gender, grade-level, ability, ethnicity, and the like. Previously, researchers had found that retention varies as a function of gender (Hauser et al. 2004; Temple et al. 2004 – with boys more likely to be retained), ethnicity/SES (Hauser et al. 2004; Temple et al. 2004 – with minority and disadvantaged groups more likely to be retained), grade (Martin 2010 – with students in early grades more likely to be retained), and prior achievement (Holmes 1989; Jimerson 2001 – with low achievers more likely to be retained). Hence, including

these factors enabled a more differentiated understanding of grade retention effects over and above possible moderators and covariates. Accordingly, irrespective of whether the retained student was male or female, from an English or non-English speaking background, or in early, middle, or senior high school, the effects of retention were primarily negative. Hence, these data were broadly consistent with the line of research reported above (e.g., Hong and Yu 2007; Jimerson 2004; Silbergliitt et al. 2006; Temple et al. 2004) and suggest that in terms of academic outcomes, it is best to remain with one's cohort rather than be retained in a grade for another year.

Grade Retention and Young People's Non-academic Outcomes

Non-academic outcomes have received relatively less attention in grade retention research. Non-academic outcomes encompass social, behavioral, and emotional factors. In contrast to the generally consistent line of (negative) findings in academic outcomes, the research into non-academic outcomes tends to yield mixed results (Jimerson 2004). For example, although research identifies socio-emotional and adjustment difficulties associated with grade retention (e.g., Jimerson 2001 in a meta-analysis of retention effects; Jimerson et al. 1997 in a longitudinal study of early grade retention), there is some research that finds no negative stigma as a result of grade retention (Alexander et al. 1994).

Martin (2010) sought to further address this issue by investigating the important social issue of peer relationships and the important psycho-emotional issue of self-esteem. Notably, because these non-academic factors were assessed in the same study as academic factors (see above), the academic and non-academic effects of grade retention could be meaningfully juxtaposed in his investigation. Based on data from a large sample of high school students, using SEM Martin (2010) demonstrated that after controlling for interactions with other factors, demographic covariates and ability, there were significant main effects of grade retention. Specifically, he found that grade retention was a significant *negative* predictor of self-esteem but was not significantly associated with peer relationships. Notably, these predominantly negative findings were also demonstrated in sub-analyses with a matched sample of promoted students.

This study extended prior research by clarifying effects on non-academic outcomes in the same analytic model as academic factors. Although research had identified negative socio-emotional and adjustment effects of grade retention (e.g., Jimerson 2001; Jimerson et al. 1997), such findings have not been consistent (e.g., see Alexander et al. 1994). Interestingly, the Martin (2010) findings seemed to reinforce this mixed profile: on the one hand, there were significant negative effects on general self-esteem; on the other hand, there was no significant effect for peer relationships. It might be therefore concluded that the non-academic effects of grade retention are either negative or null.

Why Does the Practice Continue?

It seems that grade retention does not have the positive academic and non-academic effects that might be anticipated given its continued implementation (Jimerson 2004). This raises the question as to why it continues to be a response to problematic pathways through school. As discussed in Martin (2010), it appears there are a number of reasons why this is the case. First, grade retention is a relatively straightforward strategy to implement. Second, grade retention does not require much innovation or change in school structure and practice. Thus, in relation to these two points, there is not a great deal of logistic complexity involved in grade retention, at least, not on the school's side. Third, it has been suggested that advocates of grade retention tend to focus on research that does not include the appropriate controls and covariates and thus find it easy to dismiss problematic findings (Temple et al. 2004). Fourth, as there is increased focus on schools in respect to accountability, grade retention may represent a growing structural response for improved or enhanced school-level performance (Jimerson 2004). Finally, grade retention effects are not unequivocally negative; there is research finding positive effects. For example, in relation to academic outcomes, Alexander and colleagues (Alexander et al. 1994) found retained elementary students performed better than they had previously been performing and that these effects remained positive over a number of years. Notwithstanding this, Alexander et al. (2004) later noted that these positive effects diminish over time (see also Holmes 1989; Temple et al. 2004) and that even these positive effects will not bring retained

students' achievement to the level of the "average" student in their new cohort. Taken together, as with many structural decisions aimed at responding to educational problems, there are various rationales for implementing grade retention. Importantly, however, with many negative student-level effects evident in the literature, it appears that structural responses along these lines lack educational validity.

What Can Schools Do?

What, then, can schools do in response to academic underachievement and social, behavioral, or emotional challenges that have typically been the reason for grade retention? Some researchers have pointed out that the normal range and variation in human development is not aligned with the overly lockstep nature of the curriculum nor the standards that it drives and demands (Alexander et al. 2004). In keeping with this, Jimerson (2004) has argued that "acknowledging basic principles of child development and early education, it is preposterous to imagine that children are failing to meet standards" (p. 86). Thus, a more flexible orientation toward implementation of curriculum that aligns with the normal variation in human development is an important starting point.

Martin (2009, 2010) notes that before waiting for underachievement, it has been recommended that, *inter alia*, (a) schools be forward-looking to promote the skills needed for keeping up with the curriculum; (b) educators look to provide additional instruction as necessary for students to master the curriculum; (c) parents/caregivers and schools engage tutoring when needed; (d) teachers and parents/caregivers tackle any literacy and numeracy issues that are posing difficulties; and (e) schools, teachers, and psychologists/counselors seek to foster effective home-school partnerships (Temple et al. 2004). As Temple et al. observe, "little attempt is made to address the underlying conditions that cause underachievement such as low motivation, poverty, poor nutrition, or inadequate instruction" (2004, p. 62). Jimerson (2004) has identified some core and key attributes and skills that should be the focus of early targeting including reading intervention, behavior modification, cognitive training, direct instruction, and parental/caregiver involvement. Jimerson (2004) concludes: "children in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade do not fail; their lack of academic success reflects the failure of adults to provide

appropriate support and scaffolding to facilitate their early developmental and academic trajectories" (p. 86).

Martin (2009, 2010) also points out that there are vital implications for teachers in the decision to retain a student in a given grade for an additional year. The act of grade retention will mean that some students in a class will be markedly older for cohort. In some cases, the age range of the class will be approximately 2 years. This will pose pedagogical challenges, particularly in terms of where to pitch the lesson and how students within the class interact and interrelate. It has been reported that teachers may respond to these challenges by gearing pedagogy toward the more capable children, thus escalating the academic curriculum for students who otherwise would not be faced with this escalation. This leads to greater dissonance between curriculum and students (Spitzer et al. 1995), gives rise to further difficulties for individual students, and further entrenches the "logic" of grade retention.

There are also financial and other implications in the grade retention decision. An additional year of tuition is a very expensive and time-consuming response to students' underachievement. The direct and indirect costs of educating a child for an additional year (compounded by all grade retentions in the system) are substantial. According to Alexander et al. (2004), promoting a student and also administering targeted intervention represents a more cost-effective and less disruptive approach to educational and other problems. Indeed, Alexander et al. (2004) advise that grade retention should be a last resort – with the ideal scenario one in which children never reach the point of retention. As noted above, Temple et al. (2004) report that compared to students who are promoted and receive educational intervention, their retained counterparts perform more poorly – suggesting that grade promotion with educational intervention is a strategy with greater educational validity (Temple et al. 2004).

Some Caveats and Considerations to Assist Interpretations and Decisions

This discussion has put a view that the effects of grade retention tend to be negative for academic outcomes and somewhat mixed (though, tending negative) for non-academic outcomes. In articulating this view, it is important to recognize some attendant caveats and considerations. Alexander et al. (2004), for example, rightly note that many of the demonstrated links

between grade retention and negative academic outcomes (e.g., school dropout) are typically not causal and that a shared history of negative factors (not just grade retention) leads to negative outcomes. Thus, while grade retention plays a part in shaping various academic and non-academic outcomes, there is a multiplicity of factors that must be considered in understanding its effects. It is also vital to recognize that grade retention will have different effects for different students and student types, including in cases, positive effects for some students under some circumstances. That is, as Alexander et al. (2004) rightly point out, much grade retention research is large scale and deals with averages; hence, there will be some students who do benefit from the practice. Following from this, it is possible that the reasons for grade retention may have an influence on its effectiveness. Notably, there is not a particularly good understanding of what circumstances or processes may render grade retention beneficial. Thus, a better understanding of individual cases is warranted (Alexander et al. 2004) with particular focus on what circumstances and processes might lead to adaptive outcomes.

Conclusion

This discussion has sought to shed further light on the implications of grade retention for adolescents' academic and non-academic outcomes. It appears that its effects are negative, more so for academic than non-academic outcomes. However, numerous caveats and additional considerations are relevant to interpretations and decisions based on these findings. Encouragingly, the grade retention literature points to numerous educational and policy responses to assist young people's journey through school, some of which were discussed here. Taken together, the concepts and evidence presented herein synthesize work by researchers studying grade retention and offer insights for educators and policy makers seeking to enhance the educational outcomes of students, particularly those students who experience academic and/or non-academic difficulties in school life.

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Graffiti

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Graffiti commonly refers to drawings, inscriptions, or designs that have been painted, sprayed, scratched, or otherwise placed on a surface typically without an owner's consent and in ways meant to be seen readily by the public (see Hanesworth 1996). This broad definition, however, masks an incredible amount of diversity in what constitutes graffiti, and that diversity reflects an equal diversity of motivations for engaging in graffiti. Regardless of this broad diversity, graffiti remains disparaged by those victimized by it and by society in general, for graffiti, by definition, typifies vandalism when it is done without property owners' permission (Goldstein, 1996). The public costs of graffiti, in addition to the blights and fears it can create, are considerable; in the USA alone, for example, estimates reveal that \$12 billion a year is spent cleaning up graffiti (see Weisel, 2004). Thus, although communities have long tolerated graffiti as something that exemplified youthful exuberance, play, adventure, and perhaps

even as a rite of passage for some youth, graffiti has become an extensive and expensive social problem.

Although there are many types of graffiti (see Russell, 2008), commentators generally identify three types: gang graffiti, tags/throw-ups, and pieces. Gang graffiti generally involves scrawls that look primitive and focus on a gang symbol or name. This type of graffiti serves several tactical purposes, such as to mark territory, warn away potential intruders, insult other gangs, and eulogize the dead. This type of graffiti has been related to criminal activity and violence, especially when some deface the graffiti. Tags or tagging involves stylized signatures of those who paint it. Throw-ups are figures or names written in bubble style letters that often are bright and multicolored. Rather than having a primitive look, throw-ups tend to appear to have more artistic characteristics. Individuals who tag do so for fame and recognition either through the quality or quantity of their work or by the risks they take in applying the graffiti. Taggings account for the vast majority of graffiti. Pieces are distinguishable from other types of graffiti by their being much more detailed, multicolored murals that range in size. Pieces tend to be larger than tags and throw-ups and they may be large enough to cover entire building walls. Like taggers, piece artists seek fame and recognition, but they also sometimes do graffiti to support themselves economically, practice their artistic abilities, or express certain societal or political beliefs. Given that doing pieces requires considerable skill and sophistication, they do not surprisingly constitute only a small portion of all graffiti.

The above different types of graffiti are important to distinguish because each is driven by different motivations and express different meanings. Available evidence suggests that motives likely vary considerably (for reviews, see Weisel, 2004; Macdonald, 2001). Some of the most likely motivations for conventional graffiti include boredom, despair, resentment, failure, anger, hostility, and frustration. As expected, other motives for engaging in graffiti likely include responses to peer pressure and insufficient adult supervision, as well as efforts to gain notoriety or claim territory by denoting a gang affiliation. These latter reasons are the types that relate to a broad variety of delinquent activities. Together, these different motivations highlight how graffiti may be vindictive or malicious. Still, the results tend to be unwelcomed and the reality is that

graffiti is far from a senseless destruction of property; graffiti fulfills offenders' psychological needs, especially their sense of excitement, control, and risk taking. As with other types of delinquent and criminal activity, graffiti offenders typically are young, in their early teens, and male. Available evidence, then, reveals important motivations, and how they relate to other forms of delinquent activity, that would need to be considered by efforts to control the negative aspects of graffiti.

Although by definition graffiti is an act of vandalism (since it is placed on someone's property without permission), controversy surrounds whether it should be viewed as art or as vandalism. Indeed, whether to view it as an art and/or vandalism forms the basis of the argument between graffiti's proponents and opponents. Opponents view graffiti as vandalism that poses an immense cost to society and that invites criminal activity by indicating the decay of neighborhoods. These views result in the belief that those who do graffiti should be punished or otherwise stopped from destroying property. Proponents counter that graffiti is art, and that it is an expression for those who do not have other more legitimate means of expression accessible to them. From this perspective, some forms of graffiti simply are a deviant occupation with health promoting qualities, such as developing and earning respect, demonstrating loyalty and problem solving, providing social commentary and a voice against oppression (see Russell, 2008; MacGillivray & Curwen, 2007).

These competing viewpoints eventually support very different legal theories regarding the legal protections that should be granted to those who do graffiti (Hanesworth 1996). Viewing graffiti as art, for example, brings with it constitutional protection under the Constitution's First Amendment; viewing graffiti as vandalism would mean that it would be outside the First Amendment's protection. Propositions that graffiti is an art worth protecting, however, are likely not to gain much traction legally if the graffiti artists paint or draw on someone else's property and do so without their permission. Nevertheless, differences in meanings and motivations still could relate to society's efforts to control it. If graffiti is a form of artistic expression, it would be a matter of helping individuals express themselves in another way; if it relates to criminal activity, addressing graffiti would require an entirely different

response. These motivations confirm that efforts to curb the vast majority of graffiti must address how it can gain a mainstream presence in adolescence.

Graffiti tends to bring out strong reactions and tends to be viewed as a harm against property and broader society. Whether graffiti is a benign form of expression or a crime largely depends on its physical placement in society. In many ways, motivations for placing the graffiti do not matter in terms of whether they should be permissible, but they do matter in efforts to respond more effectively to it.

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Grandparent–Adolescent Relationships

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Overview

With increased life expectancy, diversifying families, growing number of dual-worker households, changing families, and higher rates of family breakdown, grandparents are now playing an increasing role in their grandchildren's lives. This essay reviews existing

literature regarding the characteristics of grandparent–adolescent relationship and the factors associated with the quality of this relationship. It also considers the link between grandparent involvement and emotional closeness and adolescent well-being especially in non-intact families. Finally, it discusses the role of grandparents as buffer against cumulative risk in the lives of adolescents and as promoters of resilience in the face of adversity.

Introduction

In recent decades, many Western countries have witnessed a tendency of aging of the population and lower rates of fertility. This shift from a high-mortality/high-fertility to a low-mortality/low-fertility society has resulted in an increase in the number of generations alive at one time and a decrease in the number of children within each generation. Thus, the number of individuals who will live part of their lives as members of three and four generation families is increasing (Harper and Levin 2005). In addition, with growing numbers of dual-worker households and higher rates of family breakdown, grandparents are now playing an increasing role in their grandchildren's lives (Franklin 1997). The potential of the grandchild–grandparent relationship for the development of grandchildren is becoming increasingly recognized (Smith 1991). This essay reviews the existing literature regarding the nature of the relationships adolescents have with their grandparents. It also examines the contribution of grandparenting to adolescent well-being and adjustment in diverse family and social contexts.

As interest in the role of nonnuclear members in children's and adolescents' lives has increased, there has been a tremendous advance in research knowledge regarding intergenerational relationships in the past two decades. However, a considerable part of the existing literature focuses on the young child rather than the adolescent (e.g., Hagestad and Speicher 1981; Thomas 1989). Adolescence involves various transitions that may modify a youth's relationships with parents and grandparents. Scattered empirical research findings about this modification are mixed (Creasey and Koblewski 1991). On one hand, there are data to suggest that contact with grandparents tend to lessen in transition from childhood to adolescence and beyond (e.g., Atchley 1980). It has been suggested that the many challenges teens experience,

including involvement in new relationships (particularly with peers) and in situations that demand more time and energy, may contribute to some sacrifice of the relationship they used to have with grandparents (Bridges et al. 2007; Roberto and Stroes 1992). Other studies show that the significance of grandparents and the desire for contact with them does not decline over the course of adolescence and adulthood (Kornhaber and Woodward 1981; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000). In other words, older children may tend to spend less time with grandparents but still consider them to be attachment figures and important members of their social network (Creasey and Koblewski 1991; Field and Minkler 1988; Kennedy 1990; Matthews and Sprey 1984; Van Ranst et al. 1995).

The literature on grandparent–adolescent grandchild contact is guided mainly by the social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979), which suggests that to understand children's and adolescents' development and perceptions, one should take into account not only the characteristics and interactions of children and their immediate circles (such as their parents), but also experiences with family members outside the immediate family's residence and the wider environment in which they live (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Lussier et al. 2002). Grandparents often serve as a positive influence in the lives of their grandchildren by taking on various roles such as caregiver, playmate, advocate, adviser, mentor, and friend (King et al. 2000). This theoretical framework suggests that grandparent–grandchild relationships are likely to influence grandchildren throughout childhood either directly (e.g., by giving tutelage) or indirectly (e.g., by supporting the parent) and that in order to understand these relationships, a range of ecological factors should be taken into account. One extension of the ecological framework has been Family Systems Theory in clinical research (Lussier et al. 2002; Minuchin 1985) which provides a psychosocial paradigm that emphasizes the importance of examining other family relations as affecting the child rather than focusing exclusively on mother–child relationship to better understand child development and the ability of the family to adapt to change (Cox and Paley 2003; Ruiz and Silverstein 2007). In order to understand the dynamics of children's relationships with their multiple family members that exist within dyads, triads, and so forth, grandparents are critically important members of

these family systems that should be taken into consideration (Lussier et al. 2002; Troll 1996).

The following sections review the literature regarding (a) grandparental involvement in adolescents' lives, (b) the characteristics and correlates of the adolescent–grandparent bond, and (c) the contribution of grandparenting to adolescent emotional and behavioral adjustment in general and in various familial and social contexts in particular.

The Involvement of Grandparents in the Lives of Children and Adolescents

Grandparents have always been central to supporting families (Buchanan and Ten Brinke 1997) particularly in times of need or family disruption (Kennedy and Kennedy 1993) but there is growing evidence that grandparents today are playing an increasing role in rearing the next generation. For example, The Grandparent Association in UK estimates that the 13.5 million grandparents in the UK provide some 60% of all the child care – be it full time or part time (2006) and one child in every hundred lives with a grandparent. The Office for National Statistics from the Department for Education and Skills in UK published by ONS (2006), noted that at 31 March 2005, 12% (7,500) of the total of 60,900 children in state care (or 0.8% of all children in England and Wales) were in “family and friends care.” The majority of these children would be in the care of grandparents. Compared to the UK, in the USA, researchers have noted much larger numbers of grandchildren being raised by grandparents and a vast increase in these numbers over the last 40 years. However, current policy in the UK, aimed to prioritize placement of children with “families or friends” where the parents are unable to care or the child is at risk of maltreatment may change this (Children Act 2004). According to the US Census Bureau, between 3.9% and 5.5% of children live in a household maintained by a grandparent – a 76% increase since 1970, and an increase of those households where just mother is present, to 118% from 1970 to 1997 (Casper and Bryson 1998). Burton (1992), Chalfie (1994) and others (e.g., Gordon 1999) attribute this to an increase in drug abuse, teen pregnancy, divorce, rapid rise in single parent households, mental and physical illness, AIDS, crime, child abuse and neglect, and incarceration.

Grandparent involvement can be seen as a continuum – at one end there may be no contact,

while at the other there is full-time care of grandchildren. A study by Clarke and Roberts (2004) in the UK of 870 grandparents, found that although only 0.5% of grandparents had custodial care of grandchildren, 61% looked after them during the day and over half of the grandparents surveyed were involved in regular babysitting. Three in five grandparents saw at least one grandchild on a weekly basis and a similar proportion lived within half an hour of one or more of their grandchildren. A high percentage of younger grandchildren were regularly being looked after by their grandparents (Fergusson et al. 2008). The existing literature suggests, however, that grandparents may be less involved with adolescents than with children (Dunn and Deater-Deckard 2001).

Tan et al. (2010) have examined in a UK large-scale national study of adolescents ($N = 1,478$) what, from the perspective of the young people, grandparents “normally” do. Their study demonstrates that grandparents in the UK are heavily involved in the lives of adolescents. For example, overall between 80–90% of young people reported that they were regularly in touch with at least one, or all of their grandparents. In addition, between 45% and 62% of the adolescents reported that their grandparents attended school events or other important events, between 46% and 64% of the adolescents reported that they shared their problems with their grandparents and between 16% and 24% talked about future plans with grandparents. It may be that with the changing family scenario – more working parents, more divorces, and increased longevity – grandparents are filling the gap between the “time poor” parents and the parenting needs of the young people (Tan et al. 2010).

The Roles Grandparents Play in the Lives of Grandchildren

Previous studies indicate that grandparents have a variety of functions within their intergenerational families, especially in the lives of grandchildren. In Scotland, Hill et al. (2005) conducted one of the few studies to elicit the views of teenage grandchildren. They interviewed 73 older people with at least one teenage grandchild, and then some 58 young people in individual, or joint interviews (with grandparents), or in group discussions. Ross (2006) noted that in the lives of young people grandparents have particular roles as *protectors* (“they are there when you are in

trouble”; “like second parents”); as *confidants* (“you can tell them things you cannot tell your parents”); as *supporters* mediating between generations; as *benefactors* helping with money, gifts, and school fees; as *connectors* bringing together family history, family traits, and shared characteristics. Similarly, Kornhaber (1996) asserts that grandparents have instrumental roles in their grandchildren’s lives by being a *mentor*, *role model*, and *nurturer* as well as playing the more symbolic role of *historian*, where they provide firsthand accounts of family histories, practices, and rituals of the past. Bengtson (1985) also suggests that grandparents have five separate symbolic functions: being there; grandparents as national guards; family watchdogs (see also Troll 1983); arbiters who perform negotiations between members, and participants in the social construction of family history. Most of these grandparent roles contain both instrumental and emotional aspects which “may be visualized along a continuum ranging from symbolic at one end to the interactive and instrumental at the other” (Kornhaber 1996, p. 88).

Traditionally, there is a norm, widely accepted within the White Anglo-American societies, of noninterference by grandparents in the upbringing of their grandchildren (Hill et al. 2005). Harper and Levin (2005), however, demonstrate that this norm may apply with less force to grandparents of lone parent families where grandparents can become *replacement partners* (i.e., confidante, guide, and facilitator), and *replacement parents* (i.e., listener, teacher, and disciplinarian). It is also possible that where parents are working long hours, grandparents may be undertaking roles that are more traditionally associated with parents (Tan et al. 2010).

The Quality of Adolescent–Grandparent Contact

Existing literature on grandparent–adolescent relationship show, as mentioned above, that grandparents are heavily involved in the lives of adolescents (Tan et al. 2010). It also shows that grandparents are a significant factor in the lives of adolescents. For example, Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009b) found that the majority of adolescents in their UK study, reported on significant involvement of their grandparent in their lives and on high level of emotional closeness. Most of them perceived their grandparents as important persons in their lives and respected their grandparents’ views. These

findings are consistent with previous research which has observed that adolescents generally feel affection toward their grandparents and consider the emotional help they receive from them to be important (Van Ranst et al. 1995). This research evidence highlights the importance of grandparents in grandchildren’s developing social lives throughout childhood and adolescence (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Creasey and Koblewski 1991; Ramirez-Barranti 1985).

The literature has also examined the factors associated with high-quality adolescent–grandparent contact. It has usually focused on three groups of correlates and mediating factors of the adolescent–grandparent relationship bond: the characteristics of the grandchild, the grandparent, and intergenerational relations. Current research (e.g., Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b) demonstrates the need for an ecological perspective, taking into account those three groups of correlates, in addressing adolescent–grandparent relationships and it shows, as will be demonstrated below, that the characteristics of both partners in the adolescent–grandparent dyadic relationship and the intergenerational context in which this relationship is embedded need to be examined.

With respect to the *characteristics of the grandchild*, one of the most studied variables in the literature on grandchild–grandparent interaction is gender. The literature provides contradictory evidence with respect to the grandchild’s gender (see Block 2000). On one hand, some studies report that granddaughters have more emotionally involved relationships with their grandparents than do grandsons (Creasey and Koblewski 1991; Dubas 2001). Some studies also show that grandchildren’s bonds with grandparents are stronger in same-sex grandchild–grandparent dyads (Dubas 2001; Hagestad 1985). On the other hand, others show no difference between boys and girls in their interaction with their grandparents, for example, in the activities they share with them, their emotional closeness, involvement, and satisfaction with the grandchild–grandparent relationship (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Block 2000; Hodgson 1992; Kivett 1985; Mueller and Elder 2003; Thomas 1989; Triado et al. 2005; Van Ranst et al. 1995).

The effect of cultural or ethnic affiliation on the nature of grandparent–grandchild interaction is also discussed in the literature, although not sufficiently (Bengtson 2001). Some studies of ethnicity suggest

that in the USA, for African-American (Hirsch et al. 2002; Lawton et al. 1994; Kennedy 1990; Pearson et al. 1990), American Indian (Perlmutter and Hall 1985), and Mexican-American (Giarruso et al. 2001; Markides et al. 1986) grandchildren, extended kin relationships, including those with grandparents, tend to be stronger than they are for grandchildren in White-Caucasian families. Wiscott and Kopera-Fyre (2000) found among U.S. adult grandchildren that non-Caucasian participants were more likely to engage in intergenerational culture sharing and reported more positive statements about grandparents than Caucasian participants. However, race was not related to the grandchild–grandparent relationship quality in this study. It was also found among UK adolescents that non-White grandchildren reported higher levels of respect to their grandparents' views than White adolescents. However, this study did not compare specific ethnic groups within non-White adolescents but rather treated them as components of one group (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b).

Other studies also found no effect of cultural affiliation on the emotions grandchildren had toward their grandparents (see Eisenberg 1988). Researchers have emphasized the need to include more data on the ethnic background of the respondents in intergenerational ties research (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Bengtson 2001).

Finally, some studies show that grandparents are more likely to be influential in a grandchild's life if the grandchild is doing poorly in school (Elder and Conger 2000). One might suspect that a child embedded within a strong system of family ties would fare better in school. However, there is evidence that influential grandparents may represent a protective factor that takes effect when a grandchild is struggling (e.g., Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986).

With respect to *grandparent characteristics*, studies often show that grandchildren are significantly closer to maternal than paternal grandparents, and between their maternal grandparents, they are significantly closer to their grandmother than their grandfather. Maternal grandparents were also found to be more involved in their grandchildren's lives (Clarke and Roberts 2004; Dubas 2001; Eisenberg 1988; Monserud 2008; Mueller and Elder 2003; Pollet et al. 2006; Taylor et al. 2005; Van Ranst et al. 1995; Tan et al. 2010; Wood and Lioasis 2007).

There are two compatible explanations for these gender-based findings. The first explanation is social and is based on traditional kin-keeper theories of family relations (see Dubas 2001). These theories are based on the view that females (in this case granddaughters, mothers, and grandmothers) are more involved in family relationships than are males and they have the responsibility of sustaining kin groups together (Dubas 2001; Eisenberg 1988). This view is supported by empirical findings showing that women have stronger kinship ties and stay more involved with relatives, particularly female relatives, in adulthood (Dubas 2001; Eisenberg 1988). This view explains why in some studies grandmothers evidence closer relations with their grandchildren than grandfathers. In addition, because mothers often serve as mediators between grandparents and granddaughters as some research suggests, then one can understand why maternal grandmothers are often closer and more involved with their grandchildren than paternal grandmothers (e.g., Matthews and Sprey 1985). In addition, if the role of women as kin keepers is passed along generations, then the strongest relationship should be found between maternal grandmothers and their granddaughters (Dubas 2001).

Unlike the kin-keepers theories which focus on the functions of gender and context in explaining behaviors, kin-selection theory suggests a sociobiological perspective which is drawn from new-Darwinian perspectives of development (see Dubas 2001). First, the fact that often grandmothers are more involved on the lives of grandchildren than grandfathers can be explained in the light of the principle of *inclusive fitness* developed by Hamilton (1964). This principle treats as central the number of copies of one's genes passed on through surviving offspring as well as through descendent collateral kin (Dubas 2001; Surbey 1998). Kin selection and investments are possible strategies to increase a person's fitness. Because men keep their ability to produce offspring throughout middle and old age, they may allow themselves to invest less in their offspring than postmenopausal women who continue to invest in children (or grandchildren) during postproductive period due to inability to give birth to additional children (Alington-MacKinnon and Troll 1981; Dubas 2001). This biological difference may explain the lower involvement and investment of grandfathers in their grandchildren compared with

grandmothers, as was found in some studies. In addition, based on the paternity uncertainty evolutionary hypothesis (Pollet et al. 2006), it is suggested that since maternal grandparents are related to their grandchildren by certain maternity rather than uncertain paternity, it should be expected that levels of maternal investment would be higher than those of their paternal-line counterparts. These sociobiological suppositions may support therefore the finding, mentioned above, that maternal grandmothers invest more time and energy in their grandchildren than paternal grandfathers.

However, it should be noted that some studies show marginal differences between maternal and paternal grandparents and between grandmothers and grandfathers in their relations with grandchildren (Creasey and Koblewski 1991; Triado et al. 2005). Roberto et al. (2001) suggest that the differences in the grandparent–grandchild relationship coinciding with traditional stereotypes may not be as correct as was previously thought (see also Block 2000; Thomas 1989). With recent changes in Western families, men and boys are becoming more involved in family relationships, and some gender differences are disappearing (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Block 2000). A competing explanation regarding the gender and lineage of the grandparent, though, might be linked to the fact that some studies (e.g., Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Dubas 2001; Triado et al. 2005) which did not find gender differences focused on the “closest” or “favorite” grandparent and not on all living grandparents. This focus on one selected grandparent may imply that the relative absence of differences associated with gender which means that in those relationships between grandparents and grandchildren that are good a priori (which may include more grandmothers and more maternal-lineage relationships), there are few differences associated with the grandchild’s gender, the grandparent’s gender, and lineage (see Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b). Future studies should elaborate on this investigation by studying the effect of gender on intergenerational relationships from the various perspectives of the different generations.

Finally, there is also some evidence that depending on the context there might be stronger family ties between grandchildren and paternal rather than maternal grandparents (Creasey and Kaliher 1994; King and Elder 1995; Silverstein and Long 1998). For example,

King and Elder (1995) found paternal grandfathers in agricultural societies to have the closest relationships with grandchildren, particularly grandsons. The kind of work in those families and the fact that farm property will mostly be passed down to the sons may lead to the importance of paternal grandfathers in the lives of grandsons. One can therefore observe that contextual factors may play a role in gender patterns related to grandchild–grandparent bond and that males as kin keepers is also a possibility in certain families (Dubas 2001).

Some studies emphasize the role of grandparent involvement and joint activities in creating emotionally close and supportive relationships with grandchildren and in affecting their well-being (e.g., Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Buchanan 2008). It has also been shown in some studies that the distance grandparents live from grandchildren is closely associated with stronger grandchild–grandparent relationships and emotional closeness (e.g., Mueller and Elder 2003; Uhlenberg and Hammill 1998). However, there is some evidence that long-distance grandchildren still feel satisfied from their bond with their grandparents and that the contact elements are stronger than the distance itself (Kennedy 1996). For example, in a very recent study, Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009b) found no link between geographic proximity and the extent of adolescents’ reports on emotional closeness, importance of and respect to their closest grandparents. Instead, frequency of contact and involvement of grandparents in that study contributed more to the quality of contact adolescents had with the closest grandparent. It might be that in the age of modern technology and cheaper travel young people can keep in touch with grandparents without the need for them to live close by. This finding is supported by previous studies showing that even when separated by considerable geographic distances grandchildren are still able to interact with their grandparents through phone calls, correspondence, and face-to-face contact at holiday and other occasions (Griggs et al. *in press*). Obviously, non-involved grandparents can live close to their grandchildren but not maintain regular contact with them.

Scattered evidence shows that grandparents’ total number of grandchildren may limit their level of involvement in each grandchild’s life (Elder and Conger 2000; Mueller and Elder 2003). Grandparents with higher incomes and educational attainment are also more likely to have influential or supportive

relationships, owing to their better health and greater financial resources (Mueller and Elder 2003; King and Elder 1997; Wood and Liossis 2007). Wood and Liossis (2007) found among Australian university students that there was greater emotional closeness for grandparents with better health, higher incomes, and more advanced education. However, they did not detect any significant effect of grandparent age, marital status, or employment status.

Other studies show, however, that educated and employed grandparents may have reduced investment in their grandchildren due to their more active lives outside the family that compete for their attention (Mueller and Elder 2003; Rossi and Rossi 1990). Research also suggests that poor mental and physical health may limit opportunities for active contact with grandchildren and inhibit role satisfaction (Hodgson 1992; Kivett 1993; Silverstein and Marenco 2001).

Several studies have emphasized on the contribution of *intergenerational relationships* to the adolescent–grandparent bond. According to the theory of intergenerational solidarity, relationship quality between two family members can depend on patterns of interactions between other family members (Monserud 2008). Parents can serve as a bridge between the generations of the grandparents and grandchildren and act as “gatekeepers.” According to the parent-as-mediator theory, parents can shape the nature of the grandparent–grandchild relationship because they act as intermediaries between the grandparents’ and grandchildren’s generations (Monserud 2008; Robertson 1975).

In general, studies that have examined this issue support this theory by showing that parents affect the grandparent–grandchild bond by setting examples and providing opportunities for interaction between them (e.g., Block 2000; Fergusson et al. 2008; Hodgson 1992; Matthews and Sprey 1985; Monserud 2008; Mueller and Elder 2003). Several studies show that where grandparents are important, involved figures in the lives of their grandchildren, they are likely to have high-quality relationships with the grandchild’s parents as well (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009b; Mueller and Elder 2003).

For example, Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009b) showed among a UK national representative sample of adolescents that youth whose parents had good relationships with the closest grandparent and encouraged the

grandparent–grandchild relationship consistently reported on higher levels of importance of their grandparents outside the immediate family, respect to their grandparents’ views, and emotional closeness. For these adolescents, a higher level of grandparent involvement was also found. One possible explanation for this finding may be that where parents have poor relationships with their own parents, they may be less keen to promote grandparent contact and involvement with their own children (Mueller and Elder 2003). The current state of the parent–grandparent relationships may seem therefore to reflect how much care and support parents felt they received from the grandparents earlier in life (Whitebeck et al. 1991). In the absence of close relationships between the first and second generations, significant ties between grandparents and grandchildren seem unlikely to form (Mueller and Elder 2003).

Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009b) also examined the interactions between the quality of parent–grandparent relationship and grandparent involvement. Their findings indicated that in families with poorer relationships between the closest grandparent and the parents, grandparent involvement had a stronger contribution to positive grandchild–grandparent relationship. In other words, those findings might indicate that in those families, grandparents’ relationships with their grandchildren depended more on the resources they invested than on the mere fact that they were the adolescent’s parent’s parent, as might happen more frequently in families with better parent–grandparent bonds. In the latter families, parents’ love and appreciation might create positive feelings among adolescents toward their grandparents. These findings shed more light on the role of parent–grandparent contact as mediating adolescents–grandparent exchanges. This study is one of the few to examine this interaction. Future research is required to establish these findings and interpretations.

In addition, there are only few studies that examined the role of gender regarding the effect of intergenerational relationships (e.g., Brown 2003; Matthews and Sprey 1985). One of the few to examine this issue was Monserud (2008) who found that mother’s intergenerational ties across lineage lines appeared to be more influential for grandparent–grandchild relationship than fathers.

Grandparenting and Adolescent Adjustment in Various Familial and Social Contexts

Research on the role of grandparenting in the family has been defined as a continuum with an emphasis on multidimensional and changing characteristics. As mentioned above, at the end of the continuum, there may be no involvement or just indirect contact while at the other there is full-time care of grandchildren (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Kivnick 1982; Wood and Liossis 2007). Grandparents with full-time care, the far end of grandparent involvement spectrum, present a mixed picture of the benefits for children, possibly because of unusual circumstances in which this takes place. Hunt (2001) in a review of the international literature on kinship care notes that it is not possible, due to the paucity of research evidence, to ascertain whether kinship care promotes the well-being of children. Studies in the US have shown significant emotional and general health problems amongst grandchildren raised by their grandparents (Casper and Bryson 1998). In the UK, recent research (Hansen 2006) comparing outcomes for toddlers in both formal care and grandparent care showed that the latter had the worst behavioral scores.

However, there is some research evidence that emotional closeness and informal involvement of grandparents are associated with reduced emotional and behavioral adjustment difficulties among children and adolescents (e.g., Griggs et al. *in press*; Lussier et al. 2002; Ruiz and Silverstein 2007). For example, Griggs et al. (*in press*) found among UK adolescents that grandparent involvement was significantly linked with reduced psychological adjustment difficulties. These empirical findings were reinforced by qualitative interviews. In the interviews, adolescents explained that time with grandparents represented an opportunity for relaxation, fun, and treats but also time that they received attention and could share their thoughts and problems with committed adults. Shared activities with grandparents may present opportunities to share problems and seek advice. In addition, it might also be that grandparents taking informal care of their grandchildren reduced parental stress which in turn might affect their parenting. Some young people reported that it was easier to open up to their grandparents than to their parents, often because

grandparents had shown themselves to be better listeners and more sensitive to the young person's concerns in the past.

It seems, therefore, as discussed above, that grandparent involvement may be linked to grandchildren's well-being either directly (e.g., by tutelage) or indirectly (e.g., by decreasing their parents' stress). Werner and Smith (1982) identified contact with grandparents as being one of the numerous protective factors for children at risk for maladjustment, in part because of the continuity in care that such a relationship provides during the times of family transitions.

In recent decades, growing numbers of children and adolescents spend part of their childhood within families which do not include both of their biological parents, because their parents are divorced, remarried, or single (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009a; Dunn 2002; Office for National Statistics 2007). Research consistently shows that children and adolescents in such families have on average higher probabilities of difficulties in their psychosocial, health, and school adjustment than those growing up in two-parent biological families (e.g., Amato and Keith 1991; Dunn 2002; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan 1999; O'Connor et al. 2001). Research has documented a range of risk factors for this poorer adjustment, such as socioeconomic difficulties, family conflicts, poor parental mental health, frequent changes in family situations, lack of social support for the mothers, and decreased parental attention (e.g., Amato and Keith 1991; Dunn 2002; Hetherington et al. 1998; O'Connor et al. 2001; Ruiz and Silverstein 2007).

A relationship with grandparents can be one of the more stable relationships in a child's changing world of adult relationships in non-intact family settings (Ihinger-Tallman and Pasley 1987; Kennedy and Kennedy 1993) and there is evidence that adolescents may benefit from having them in their social networks as attachment figures and sources of emotional support (Ruiz and Silverstein 2007). Previous research has shown that patterns of contact between grandchildren and their grandparents vary in different family structures. For example, Kennedy and Kennedy (1993) in a study of 400 young adults in the USA found higher levels of grandparent involvement among young adults in single-parent families and stepfamilies than those who grew up in intact families. This involvement

included taking an active role in childrearing, as well as providing gifts and money during times of need. Evidence from the UK (Dunn et al. 2001) shows that children and adolescents reported that in the weeks following parental separation, grandparents were the most frequent source of intimate confiding about family problems.

In the majority of cases of parental separation, custody of children is awarded to the mother (ONS 2007). Among non-intact families, paternal grandparents generally see less of their son's children. But maternal grandparents (especially grandmothers) often become much more involved in the care of the grandchildren during the years of single parenthood (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Dench et al. 1999; Johnson 1988; Kennedy and Kennedy 1993; Lussier et al. 2002).

Only a handful of studies have examined the links between grandparenting and grandchildren's emotional and behavioral adjustment in different family settings. These studies have found that young people in non-intact families may be the main beneficiaries of a relationship with a close grandparent. In a recent study of 925 young adults (aged 18–23) by Ruiz and Silverstein (2007), based on the National Survey of Families and Household in the USA, it was found that close and supportive relationships with grandparents reduced depressive symptoms, and that the association between grandparent social cohesion (including three dimensions: emotional closeness, frequency of contact and source of social support) and grandchildren's depression was significantly stronger for young people whose families of origin were absent a parent. Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) suggest that in the face of depletion of adult guardians in the household, grandparents serve as functional substitutes in reducing distress among young adults (see also Kennedy and Kennedy 1993). It should be noted however that their study, like some others, were retrospective and did not measure the concept of grandparent involvement per se (e.g., Ruiz and Silverstein 2007). A recent study (Attar-Schwartz et al. 2009a) among a representative sample of UK youth is one of the few to examine this issue among adolescents. It reported that while there were no differences in the level of grandparent involvement across different family structures, grandparent involvement was more strongly associated with reduced

adjustment difficulties among adolescents from lone-parent and stepfamilies than those from two-parent biological families. Although this study cannot determine causal implications, these findings may indicate that grandchildren in non-intact families are the chief beneficiaries of grandparent contact and that this contact is an important protective resource in their lives.

In addition to family structure, there is some evidence that close relationship with grandparents may serve as a buffer against adolescents' risk of maladjustment in times of cumulative family adversity and poor socioeconomic status. Contextual risk factors do not occur in isolation, and it is the combination of different risk factors that portends negative child outcomes (Flouri et al. 2010; Rutter 1979). Grandparenting, representing caring adults outside the immediate family, can serve as a protective factor against such risks (King and Elder 1997). Some recent studies have started to explore the role of grandparents in the adjustment of youth experiencing specific family and social risks (e.g., Flouri et al. 2010; Pittman 2007). Flouri et al. (2010) examined this issue among UK adolescents. Their study shows that, taking neighborhood disadvantage into account, emotional closeness to a grandparent moderates the association of adverse life events which occurred in the last year (such as being a victim of crime/violence/ assault, more frequent parental conflicts, parental separation) with hyperactivity and broad psychopathology. These findings suggest that the role of grandparents deserves further attention in future investigations of children's positive development in general but also resilience in the face of adversity.

Limitations of Existing Research

As interest in the role of non-nuclear members in children's and adolescents' lives has increased, there has been a tremendous advance in research knowledge regarding intergenerational relationships in the past 2 decades. However, as emerges from the above review, current literature is still limited. There is still relatively little research on grandparenting and its contribution to the well-being of children and adolescents. A considerable part of the existing literature focuses on the young child rather than the adolescent (e.g., Hagestad and Speicher 1981; Thomas 1989).

Discussion has focused for the most part on the perspective of the grandparent (e.g., Peterson 1999; Roberto et al. 2001), on classifying grandparents' roles in the lives of grandchildren and on their demographic characteristics (e.g., Mueller and Elder 2003; Tinsely and Parke 1984). Research so far is also generally based on relatively small-scale or convenience samples (Eisenberg 1988; Hirsch et al. 2002; Block 2000; Kennedy and Kennedy 1993; Taylor et al. 2005) and on culturally homogenous (mainly Caucasian) samples (e.g., Lussier et al. 2002). Much of the previous research also focuses only on the main effects of limited number of predictors, such as gender of the grandparent or the grandchild (e.g., Eisenberg 1988) and does not consider other factors that may moderate or interact with these factors, such as ethnicity, and parent–grandparent relationship.

Summary

In summary, in spite of the limitations of the literature mentioned above, the cumulative knowledge so far demonstrates that grandparents are a significant factor in the lives of adolescents. Adolescents feel affection toward their grandparents, have meaningful relationships with them, and value their emotional help. The research evidence reviewed above emphasizes the importance of grandparents in grandchildren's developing social lives throughout childhood and adolescence.

Research has demonstrated the need of applying an ecological perspective on studying adolescent–grandparent bond. It shows that the characteristics of the adolescent, grandparent, and parent–grandparent relationship all contribute to the nature of the adolescent–grandparent bond. Most importantly, the intergenerational context in which the adolescent–grandparent contact occurs has a significant contribution to shaping the adolescent–grandparent bond. Research supports the argument that parents' ties to their parents matter to the grandparent–grandchild bond even when grandchildren become adolescents or young adults. In addition, the extent to which grandparents were active in the lives of adolescents also appeared to be an influential factor for adolescent–grandparent bond. The findings suggest that what really matters is what grandparents *do* in their relationships in order to make it significant for young people.

The literature also indicates that grandparent involvement matters to adolescent emotional and behavioral adjustment. This is especially true for adolescents in non-intact families and those facing adversities. Given the rising proportion of children and adolescents growing up in nontraditional family structures and changing life circumstances, more attention should be paid to the role of grandparents as social supporters for children and adolescents raised in these changing and complex environments. Grandparents in those contexts could serve as protective factors against risk. They may help to provide stability amidst the changing ground of family and social life that arises in modern society. These findings suggest that the role of grandparents deserves further attention in future investigations of children's and adolescents' development as well as in policy agenda.

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Gratitude

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Overview

Gratitude is experienced when people receive something beneficial; it is the appreciation they feel when somebody does something kind or helpful for them. It has been defined as “a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty” (Emmons 2004, p. 554). While gratitude has been largely ignored throughout psychology's history, it has recently attracted considerable interest from the scientific community (see Emmons and McCullough 2004, for a review). But most of this interest has been with adults, the major researchers being Sara Algoe, David DeSteno, Robert Emmons, Todd Kashdan, Neal Krause, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Michael McCullough, Jo-Ann Tsang, Philip Watkins, and Alex Wood. Indeed, a PsycINFO search with the terms “gratitude” and “adolescence” yielded only eight papers and “gratitude” and “adolescents” yielded only 17 papers. Gratitude research with adolescents is critically needed to understand and promote the full spectrum of youth development, namely, flourishing into happy, productive, and contributing members of society. The primary aim of this essay is to shed light on what is known about gratitude in adolescence. The discussion begins with the main findings from current research on gratitude in adolescence and then proceeds to what is known so far about the development of gratitude and its promotion. Some measurement issues are then described followed by a discussion of the gaps in knowledge and directions for future gratitude research.

Current Research

There are five known published studies examining gratitude in adolescence. Three of the studies use cross-sectional designs (Baumgarten-Tramer 1938; Froh et al. 2009b; Gleason and Weintraub 1976), and the remaining two use experimental designs

(Froh et al. 2008, 2009a). The first published study on gratitude in adolescence investigated its development (Baumgarten-Tramer 1938). Students ($N = 1,059$, ages 7–15) from the city of Berne, Switzerland were asked two questions: (1) What is your greatest wish? (2) What would you do for the person who granted you this wish? After coding the responses, four types of gratitude emerged. *Verbal gratefulness* (e.g., “I should thank him”) occurred in 30–48% of the total replies. It was mainly expressed in 15-year-olds (72%).

Concrete gratefulness occurs when the child wants to give the benefactor something in return for the gift (e.g., “I should give him a book, a bow, a pocket knife”). There are two kinds of concrete gratefulness: exchange and material. Exchange gratitude occurs when the beneficiary gives the benefactor an object in return for an object (e.g., a hat in return for a DVD). (Data were not provided on the percentage of youth demonstrating exchange gratitude.) Material gratitude occurs when the beneficiary shares with the benefactor some benefits of the gift (e.g., giving the benefactor a ride to a party in a car). This type of gratitude was most frequent with 8-year-olds (51%) and least frequent with children between 12 and 15 years of age (6%).

Connective gratitude is an attempt by the beneficiary to create a spiritual relationship with the benefactor. “I would help him in case of need” characterizes this type of gratitude. Connective gratitude was reported by children as young as 7 years of age but became more frequent at the age of 11 and occurred in 60% of 12-year-olds (Baumgarten-Tramer 1938). Here, youth seem to lose some of their egocentrism and become more other-centered and capable of abstract thought, exhibiting the gains in social-emotional competence that emerge during early adolescence (Saarni 1999).

Last, *finalistic gratefulness* is exemplified by the adolescent who, for example, wishes to make the soccer team and expresses gratitude by always being punctual to practice and obeying the coach’s instructions. Though data are not provided, it is suggested that finalistic gratefulness is most common in 13- to 15-year-olds due to gratitude taking a higher form in later developmental stages. Empirical data do not exist regarding Baumgarten-Tramer’s hypotheses. Aside from one study examining politeness routines in youth (Gleason and Weintraub 1976) – where they found that children before the age of 6 thanked an adult for giving them candy considerably less often

(21%) than 10 (83%) and 11- to 16-year-olds (88%) – and another study exclusively examining some of gratitude’s benefits to early adolescent development (Froh et al. 2009b), this remains the only known attempt at scientifically elucidating the developmental trajectory and manifestation of gratitude in youth.

Can children be taught the distinction between obligatory gratitude and genuine gratitude? Social etiquette such as saying “thank you” when someone holds the door for them helps children successfully navigate the social world (Gleason and Weintraub 1976). But such social scripts do not require the child to respond with gratitude. Feeling grateful occurs mainly when someone believes the benefactor gave a gift intentionally (McCullough et al. 2001). The person held the door intentionally – they did not have to. Not expressing gratitude can lead to social problems (Apte 1974), but expressing gratitude can help individuals become socially effective communicators and proactive in securing positive social interactions as well as supportive and satisfying relationships (Hess 1970). It therefore seems fruitful to teach children and adolescents the intricacies behind the experience and expression of gratitude. Doing so may foster its development, which in turn may promote youth psychological and social functioning. But before turning to strategies for teaching gratitude and encouraging its practice among adolescents, it makes sense to first consider gratitude’s links to psychological and social well-being.

Social belonging is among the most essential human needs (Deci and Ryan 2000), and caring ties can buffer people from adversity and pathology as well as enhance their health and well-being throughout life (Baumeister and Leary 1995; House et al. 1988). Research with adults overwhelmingly indicates that gratitude is strongly related to healthy psychological and social functioning because it focuses people on self-improvement and helps them maintain and build strong, supportive social ties (Emmons and McCullough 2004). Evidence consistent with these effects, but among youth populations, has only recently started to emerge, and most of it rests on research using correlational methods administered at single points in time. For instance, among early adolescents (ages 11–13), gratitude was found to be negatively related with physical symptoms and positively related with positive affect, perceptions of peer and familial social support, optimism, providing emotional support, and

satisfaction with school, family, community, friends, and self (Froh et al. 2009b). Among late adolescents, gratitude was positively related with life satisfaction, social integration, absorption, and academic achievement and negatively related with envy, depression, and materialism (Froh et al. [in press](#)). Other research with youth indicates that strong social ties and a sense of engagement with others are significant predictors of achievement (Appleton et al. 2008; Froh et al. 2010) and of immediate and sustainable personal well-being (Froh et al. 2010; Lyubomirsky 2008; Seligman 2002). Thus, gratitude seems to be related to various indicators of psychological and social functioning with youth as it is with adults. But, as has been found with adults, can gratitude interventions help adolescents increase their well-being?

The most convincing evidence that gratitude can improve youth well-being comes from two gratitude intervention studies. In the first study (Froh et al. 2008), 11 classrooms were randomly assigned to one of three conditions – gratitude, hassles, or a no treatment control – and early adolescents (ages 11–14) completed measures daily for 2 weeks and then again at a 3-week follow-up. Those in the gratitude condition were instructed to count up to five things they were grateful for, and those in the hassles condition were asked to focus on irritants. Gratitude journal entries included benefits such as: “My coach helped me out at baseball practice,” “My grandma is in good health, my family is still together, my family still loves each other, my brothers are healthy, and we have fun everyday,” and “I am grateful that my mom didn’t go crazy when I accidentally broke a patio table.”

Counting blessings, compared with hassles, was related to more gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, and less negative affect. Students who claimed feeling grateful for receiving help from others reported more positive affect. In fact, the relation between feeling grateful for help from others and positive affect became stronger during the 2-week intervention and was strongest 3 weeks after the intervention ended. Gratitude in response to aid also explained *why* students instructed to count blessings reported more general gratitude. Recognizing the gift of aid – yet another blessing to be counted – seemed to engender more gratitude.

The most significant finding seems to be the relation between counting blessings and satisfaction with school. Students instructed to count blessings,

compared with either students in the hassles or control conditions, reported more satisfaction with their school experience (i.e., find school interesting, feel good at school, think they are learning a lot, and are eager to go to school; Huebner et al. 2000) both immediately following the 2-week intervention and 3 weeks after completing the intervention. Expressions of school satisfaction included: “I am thankful for school,” “I am thankful for my education,” and “I am thankful that my school has a track team and that I got accepted into honor society.” School satisfaction is positively related to academic and social success (Verkuyten and Thijs 2002). Many early and late adolescents, however, indicate significant amounts of dissatisfaction with their school experience (Huebner et al. 2005). Therefore, inducing gratitude in students via counting blessings may be a viable intervention for mitigating negative academic appraisals and simultaneously promoting a positive attitude about school. Holding such a view predisposes students to improving both their academic and social competence and may help motivate them to get the most out of school.

In the second study (Froh et al. 2009a), children and adolescents from a parochial school were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a gratitude intervention or a control condition. Students in the gratitude condition were asked to write a letter to a benefactor whom they have never properly thanked, to read the letter to the benefactor in person, and to then share their experience with other students in the same condition. To illustrate, one 17-year-old female wrote and read the following letter to her mother:

- I would like to take this time to thank you for all that you do on a daily basis and have been doing my whole life . . . I am so thankful that I get to drive in with you [to school] everyday and that you listen and care about the things going on in our lives. I also want to thank you for all the work you do for our church. Every week you work to provide a great lineup of worship that allows everyone to enter in and glorify God every Sunday . . . I thank you for being there whenever I need you. I thank you that when the world is against me that you stand up for me and you are my voice when I can’t speak for myself. I thank you for caring about my life and wanting to be involved. I thank you for the words of encouragement and hugs of love that get me through every storm. I thank you for sitting through

countless games in the cold and rain and still having the energy to make dinner and all the things you do. I thank you for raising me in a Christian home where I have learned who God was and how to serve him I am so blessed to have you as my mommy and I have no idea what I would have done without you. I love you a million hugs and kisses.

Students in the control condition were asked to record and think about daily events. Findings indicated that youth low in positive affect in the gratitude condition, compared with youth in the control condition, reported greater gratitude and positive affect at posttreatment and greater positive affect at the 2-month follow-up. Thus, although 44% of the published studies found support for gratitude interventions (when making contrasts with techniques that induce negative affect; e.g., record your daily hassles) (Froh et al. 2009a), this study suggests that there may be specific individuals – such as those low in positive affect – who may benefit the most.

The aforementioned studies advanced our understanding of gratitude in adolescence. It is now known that grateful adolescents are happy adolescents, and the effects of gratitude interventions with adolescents mirror those with adults. As wonderful as this may be, psychologists must tread cautiously because the scales used were created for adults – not youth. Thus, to further build a science of gratitude in adolescence, psychologists must address measurement issues so that gratitude, as it is experienced by youth, can be measured as such by psychological scales.

Measurement Issues and Measures

As mentioned previously, individuals feel grateful on occasions when they notice and appreciate the good things that happen to them, and this emotional state usually leads them to express thanks to those people who are responsible (Emmons 2004). Gratitude is a typical emotional response when a person receives a personal gift or benefit that was not earned, deserved, or expected, but instead due to the good intentions of another person (Emmons and McCullough 2003). There are a variety of experiences in individuals' social lives that can elicit grateful feelings – material (e.g., a gift), mundane (e.g., a favor), interpersonal (e.g., support from a friend), or collective (e.g., recognition by one's community, school, or club). As a moral

emotion, the experience and expression of gratitude promotes beneficial exchanges and relationships between people and the welfare of society at large (Haidt 2003) – a view that has long been shared by religions and cultures across the globe (Emmons and Crumpler 2000). Considered an important virtue for psychological and social functioning, gratitude is an emotion that instills a sense of meaning and connection to other people, communities, nature, or God (Emmons 2004).

Beyond emotion, gratitude can also represent a broader attitude toward life – the tendency to see all of life as a gift. People could experience appreciative states that involve thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes that are transpersonal (e.g., appreciation for an awe-evoking landscape, for the creativity of a work of art, or for experiences of spiritual connectedness). An attitude of gratitude may help sensitize young people to the things they find most meaningful in their lives and to the positive investments many adults in schools and communities regularly make on their behalf.

Individuals can also differ from each other in their general tendency or disposition to be grateful. Four qualities that distinguish highly grateful people from less grateful people is that they experience gratitude more intensely for a positive event, more frequently throughout the day, with greater density for any given benefit (i.e., grateful to more people), and at any given time they may have a wider span of benefits in their lives for which they are grateful (e.g., family, friends, teachers, being included in a special event, having been defended by someone) (McCullough et al. 2002). Thus, gratitude can be conceptualized at several levels of analysis ranging from momentary affect to long-term dispositions (McCullough et al. 2002).

On the basis of the above four qualities of gratitude (i.e., intensity, frequency, span, and density), McCullough et al. (2002) developed the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6), a six-item self-report scale for measuring a grateful disposition in adult populations. Sample items include, "I have so much to be thankful for," "If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list," and "I am grateful to a wide variety of people." They found that a grateful disposition was associated positively with positive affect, well-being, prosocial behaviors/traits, and religiousness/spirituality and that it was associated negatively with envy and materialistic

attitudes – findings that converged with observer ratings as well. A second self-report scale – the Gratitude, Resentment, Appreciation Test, 16-item short version (GRAT; Thomas and Watkins 2003) – measures adults' sense of abundance in life and appreciation of others. Sample items include: "I couldn't have gotten where I am today without the help of many people" and "I think it's important to appreciate each day that you are alive." Preliminary evidence suggests that these two dispositional measures may also be suitable for children and adolescents (Froh et al. in press), but further research is needed.

A third self-report scale, the Gratitude Adjective Checklist (GAC; McCullough et al. 2002) – which is the sum of the adjectives of grateful, thankful, and appreciative – was used to measure gratitude in youth as a disposition (Froh et al. 2009a, in press) and as a mood (Froh et al. 2009b). Students were asked to rate the degree to which they experienced each emotion "in general" in the former study (trait) and "since yesterday" in the latter studies (mood). This research suggests the GAC may be a valid and reliable measure of both a grateful disposition and a grateful mood among early and late adolescents.

A major obstacle to gratitude research with adolescents, however, is that no scale currently exists that was specifically designed to measure a grateful disposition that is still forming in development. Although reliability and validity data of the adult scales seem reasonable, they do not consider adolescent development and its intricacies (Froh et al. 2007). Also needed are corresponding parent and teacher scales. Such scales are needed before psychologists can fill in the gaps in knowledge by examining the development of gratitude and seriously conducting gratitude interventions with youth.

Gaps in Knowledge and Promising Directions for Future Research

The development of gratitude has only been examined indirectly by way of applying theories of children's social and cognitive development (McAdams and Bauer 2004). The early sources of gratitude or factors that promote its development, factors that inhibit its development, and the unique benefits of gratitude to human development remain largely uncharted (Bono and Froh 2009; Froh and Bono 2008). These represent three main areas where empirical knowledge is lacking.

Next, each of these areas is considered by focusing on likely developmental mechanisms and promising directions for future research.

Although empirically little is known about the development of gratitude, many social and cognitive factors likely play a role in its development. First, because gratitude is an acquired virtue that focuses on the conditions of benefit exchanges (Emmons and Shelton 2005), children could benefit from linguistic prompts that not only encourage politeness but also elaborate on the social cognitive appraisals that elicit gratitude (i.e., the personal value a benefit has for them, the intentions of a benefactor, or the costs incurred by the benefactor). For instance, adults or older peers could emphasize how much another person went out of his way to provide help whenever they are privy to such incidences in a young person's life. If adults regularly modeled appreciative responses in interactions with other adults and with youth themselves, this would undoubtedly help provide young people with structure and guidance for experiencing and expressing gratitude.

Second, empathy is needed for a beneficiary to be able to appreciate the conditions of benefit-giving situations and to respond appropriately (McCullough et al. 2001). Thus, future research should examine how empathy and other social-emotional competencies as well as the presence of social models enable a young person to reliably make the social cognitive appraisals mentioned above. Third, engagement in mutually beneficial interactions with adults (e.g., coordinated activities at school, service learning in the community, or joint play at home), and encouragement to do the same with peers (e.g., through creative learning projects or during extracurricular activities in which youth can collaborate on personally meaningful tasks) may also facilitate the development of gratitude by providing fertile social experiences in which benefits are likely to be exchanged. Such hypotheses would be fruitfully investigated through longitudinal research exploring the early developmental sources of gratitude.

One factor that may inhibit the development of gratitude is materialism. Gratitude seems to drive intrinsic goal pursuit, prosocial motivations, and the fulfillment of higher-order needs (e.g., self-expression and purpose), whereas materialism seems to drive extrinsic goal pursuit, individualistic motivations, and the fulfillment of lower-order needs (e.g., possessions

of comfort and safety) (Kasser 2002; Polak and McCullough 2006). Evidence from research with adolescents indicates that gratitude is incompatible with the pursuit of materialistic or extrinsic goals and that it positively predicts academic achievement, mental health, and well-being – outcomes that are negatively predicted by materialism (Froh et al. in press). Materialism is a rising problem for youth (Chaplin and John 2007), and youth who overvalue materialism tend to be less invested in personal relationships and spend less time with their families too (Flouri 2004). Further, adolescents who are more extrinsically motivated report more tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use, and greater sexual intercourse than adolescents who are less extrinsically motivated (Williams et al. 2000). Thus, if gratitude encourages personal growth, strong social ties, and reduces the focus on extrinsic aspirations, it may also reduce adolescents' vulnerability to health risks (Masten 2001). Research should test whether and how these effects occur in youth as well as explore other factors that may inhibit the development of gratitude.

Finally, though the beneficial impact that gratitude may have on youth development has been insinuated throughout this essay, evidence available so far from research with adolescents indicates that the biggest benefit may be that gratitude is intimately linked to purpose (Froh et al. 2010). Indeed, a sense of gratitude for being able to both participate in what the world has to offer and make a unique contribution characterized highly purposeful adolescents (Damon 2008). That gratitude should help adolescents build purpose and thrive makes sense when considering the consistent finding (in research with adults and youth) that gratitude helps hone both an inward focus on self-improvement and an outward focus on establishing a social support network that is consistent with such efforts.

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Gray Matter

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Gray matter is a term used to describe the areas of the brain dominated by cells without significant myelin covering, as opposed to ► [white matter](#), which appears white because of ► [Myelin](#). Numerous studies now document nonlinear changes in regional gray matter volumes during childhood and adolescence, with the changes being a reduction in gray matter. Gray matter loss is due to programmed reduction through synaptic pruning that occurs in healthy adolescence and links to pathology when the pruning is atypical.

Changes in gray matter develop heterogeneously, and those changes influence the course of normal or abnormal development. The total volume of gray matter in each lobe, and in the brain overall, exhibits a pre-pubertal increase followed by post-pubertal loss; gray matter volume follows an inverted U-shaped trajectory in frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes (Giedd et al. [1999](#)). Each lobe follows different developmental trajectories, with the frontal lobes peaking in gray matter volumes around age 11, the temporal lobes continuing to increase in volume until age 14 years, and the cerebellum showing the longest developmental time-course. Sex differences in gray matter loss also have been identified, with boys achieving peak gray matter volumes typically 1–2 years later than girls, especially in the frontal, parietal and temporal regions (see Giedd et al. [1999](#)) and these differences have been found to influence personality dispositions, such as neuroticism and extraversion (Blankstein et al. [2009](#)). The structural and functional non-linear development of the human brain and the deviation of normal brain development links to the most major neuropsychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia. Those associations suggest a neurodevelopmental basis for these disorders and highlights the need to study both normal and abnormal brain changes with age to understand how major neuropsychiatric disorders emerge (see Stiles [2000](#); Gogtay [2008](#)). Such studies also shed light on normal development and gray matter's significant role in adolescent development.

Cross-References

► Brain Maturation

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Group Homes

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Overview

This essay describes group home programs for adolescents. The essay begins with a brief description of the history of group homes, current trends, controversies, and key terms. The discussion highlights how group home programs can provide an effective treatment modality on the continuum of care for adolescents and their families.

Group home programs have been utilized in adolescent care for decades. Many child-care professionals consider group homes a critical part in the continuum of care in the treatment of adolescents. Youth reside in residential group homes for various reasons. Whether they are placed in residential care due to their parents neglect or by their own behaviors, these youth need a variety of services. Many times, the term at-risk youth will be used to describe adolescents that reside in these group home programs. These adolescents are at-risk of failing school (thus, dropping out of school), being arrested for criminal activity, or being removed from

their home due to out-of-control behavior. Families, mental health agencies, and the juvenile justice system continue to seek the most effective (evidence-based) programs to help adolescents and address the real problem of juvenile criminal activity (Scott and Lorenc 2007). In terms of juvenile criminal activity, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2009)) reported that, in 2005, US courts handled an estimated 1.7 million delinquency cases. The study reports that the number of delinquency cases increased 61% from 1997 to 2005. This increase in juvenile cases has continued the need and demand for effective, evidenced-based, treatment programs. Group home programs are considered one viable option for treatment.

Most people not working in the adolescent treatment field are unaware of the large number of adolescents residing in residential programs. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2009) reported that over 137,000 juveniles were court ordered to some type of residential placement in 2005. The US Department of Health and Human Services (2008) reported that over 500,000 children (adjudicated or not) resided in some type of out-of-home placement during 2005. Data from the Child Welfare League of America (2005) report that there are more than 36,000 residential/group home programs in the USA (this does not include foster care homes).

Group home programs are considered one treatment modality under the term residential programs or out-of home care. Residential treatment facilities, wilderness programs, emergency shelters, and other 24-h programs are considered other treatment paradigms under the residential program identifier. The broader term, out-of-home care, includes foster care, hospital settings, independent living settings, and residential programs. Due to the large amount of various settings and treatment goals, there is no one definition of a residential setting. Counselors, parents, and other mental health professionals are encouraged to learn about the specific treatment goals and program mission when making referrals for treatment. For purposes of this essay, the terms and scope of treatment utilized by therapeutic group homes (TGH) will be discussed.

History and Setting

There are various treatment curricula utilized in TGH programs. One of the leading treatment modalities

used in group home facilities for over 30 years is the Teaching Family Model developed in the late 1960s by the University of Kansas (Phillips et al. 1974). The teaching family model incorporates the use of caring and invested adults serving as direct child-care workers involved in each child's individual treatment. This model also emphasizes the development of an appropriately structured program, use of milieu therapy, and an emphasis on the development of character of each adolescent in the program (Larzelere et al. 2004). Larzelere et al. support the use of the traditional married couple to serve as houseparents who oversee the day-to-day routines and provide a family atmosphere in the group home. Many group home organizations are finding it hard to staff their programs with the traditional married couple and are also using a shift worker paradigm.

A typical day for an adolescent in a group home is very structured with opportunities to work on issues with both staff and other clients. The day starts off with morning wake-up call by the child-care worker. The clients are expected to complete their morning chores and assist with some aspects of preparing breakfast, before they are off to school. The after-school programming depends on the group home program and setting. Many group home programs allow clients, on higher levels in the point system, to participate in extracurricular school and community activities. The group homes contend that all of these activities are potential learning experiences that can be used to work on a client's treatment goals.

The afternoon and evenings are also filled with homework time, therapy (individual, group, or milieu), and routine day-to-day activities. The teachable moments within a day are numerous and the staff are trained to take advantage of these times to work on improving the client's overall behaviors, self-esteem, and critical thinking skills.

Most group homes are neighborhood homes purchased by the group home organization. They are indiscernible from other homes within the community. These homes can serve between five and eight adolescents at a time. Most states have statutes limiting the amount of group home facilities within a certain distance from each other (e.g., no more than one group home within a mile radius of another group home). The typical group home is located within a local community and serves children within a close geographic

proximity. This allows the adolescents to be involved in normal community experiences and also enables the parents (legal guardians) to be involved in their child's treatment. Research also supports efforts to keep the adolescent close to home for reducing overall costs, keeping the parents involved, and possible increase in treatment success (Bettmann and Jasperson 2009; Mendel 2000). The average length of stay varies for each program. Scott and Lorenc (2007) contend that a typical stay is between 6 and 9 months. Practically any age child could reside in a group home program. Most group home programs serve adolescents from 12 to 18 years old. The organization's treatment team will determine the age of the clients residing in a group home. The treatment team will also make the determination about a client's IQ lower limits based on the parameters of the program (e.g., clients must have an IQ over 70 to participate in the program). The primary goals of most group home programs are to improve overall behaviors, improve academic performance, and reduce delinquent and criminal behavior. Other goals include working on the parent/child relationship and provide the child and legal guardian with the necessary tools to increase the chances of success once the child returns home.

Goals and Treatment

One of the main goals for adolescents of group home care is to improve their academic performance (Traube and McKay 2008). Clients in most group home programs will either be enrolled in local public schools or participate in on-site education programs. Many times these students have failing grades and multiple suspensions. The group home staff will work directly with the schools to improve overall academic performance with the goal of increasing their chances for future academic success. Structured homework times in the evenings are also chances to improve academic performance. Study times in the group homes are a great way to utilize tutors from local colleges and universities.

Another main treatment goal of group home programs is to improve overall behaviors in each adolescent served. Many times these adolescents come into care having difficulty with anger management, verbalizing their thoughts and feelings, and low self-esteem. They tend to rebel against rules and structure, some by running away, some through aggression, and some by withdrawing emotionally. The adolescents can work on

their issues through the intensive daily work of the child-care staff and mental health therapist. Many programs operate a behavioral modification system based on the classic token economy theory. As the client's behaviors improve, they earn more points, resulting in moving up the level system toward graduation. Each level has certain, predetermined rewards that are designed to reinforce positive behaviors. Group homes are encouraged to create individualized treatment plans and goals specific to each client.

Group home programs also understand the power and connection between spirituality, religion and counseling. Prochaska and Norcross (2003) suggest that the connection between religion and spirituality are one of the major future developments in psychotherapy. Simpson (2009) discusses the growing body of research that indicates a relationship between spirituality and positive mental health. Some states mandate that group home programs (licensed by the state) allow clients to exercise their religious freedom. This includes the group home programs making arrangements to provide time and transportation for clients to practice their chosen spiritual and religious preferences.

Residential treatment programs, including group homes, are embracing the role and importance of parental involvement in their child's treatment. Research now suggests that parental involvement is a major factor in the treatment of adolescents residing in residential placements (Barth 2005; Grupper and Mero-Jaffe 2008). Many times, the parents do not see the connection between their interactions with their child and the child's behaviors. Some parents have had the mentality that they just need to drop their child off at the group home and pick them up when the child is better or cured. Some group home programs mandate parental/legal guardian involvement in order for the adolescent to remain in the program (Scott and Lorenc 2007). The goal is not to shame the parents, but empower them (Traube and McKay 2008) and equip them with the tools necessary for lasting changes in the family as a whole. Treatment involving the legal guardians is conducted in various ways, from family counseling to individual and group counseling.

Group home programs are also realizing the importance of having a mental health therapist be a part of the treatment team. Whether the professional is an employee of the group home program or employed by an external agency, they can play a crucial role in

the treatment of the adolescent. Masters level mental health counselors (or related masters-trained clinicians) can provide diagnostic assistance, develop treatment plans, work with families, and facilitate individual and group counseling (Scott and Lorenc 2007). These counselors can assist the adolescent with improving behaviors, academic performance and possibly improve the relationship with their parents. The mental health professional can also help the organization decide on the appropriate evidence-based treatment modalities to use in the group home program.

The use of effective, evidence-based treatment continues to be the standard for group homes wanted to be licensed by the state and/or nationally accredited. Since 2003 states have implemented reform to have group homes start using evidence-based practices (EBP) to increase the quality of services (Lieberman 2009b). However, there is a debate on the exact definition of EBP and how to quantify the subjective term of the client's perceived quality of life (Davidson-Methot 2004). Lieberman has pointed out in his article that beyond simply defining what EBP is exactly, other issues must be factored in such as ethnic/cultural differences, replacing clinical judgment with a standardized process, and implementing EBP from a controlled setting into a clinical practice and/or residential facilities.

Parents, referring organizations, and mental health professionals want to know that the group home program is using evidence-based treatment techniques for each client served. Treatment types that are used in group home programs include individual and group therapy, milieu therapy, behavioral therapy, interpersonal skills training, wilderness programs, and family counseling. Lipsey et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis that suggested treatment such as teaching family homes, interpersonal skills training, multiple services, and behavioral programs provided positive effects for serious juvenile offenders in residential programs.

The term treatment is not just used to describe procedures to work on changing behaviors and thinking. Researchers (Scott and Lorenc 2007; Whittaker 2004) strongly suggest that effective group home programs also utilize as many services in the community as needed. Linking the adolescents with dentists, psychiatrists, dieticians, and primary care doctors during and after discharge is critical in the adolescent's treatment.

Making appropriate referrals upon discharge will increase the chances of lasting positive changes for the adolescent and their family.

Licensure and Accreditation

A spotlight has been shown on group homes, along with other residential facilities, in recent years because of reports of abuse and neglect when dealing in disciplinary measures (Kelly and Frazier 2005; Scott and Duerson 2009). Over the past decade, communities have seen a dramatic increase in the opening of group home programs, many claiming to provide effective treatment for their clients. A pressing concern for group home programs is the need for all programs to be licensed and/or nationally accredited. Without accreditation and licensure group homes do not have to follow a specific quality of care and are not held responsible for the services they provide. Many of these programs choose not to pursue state licensure or national accreditation, which has led to some of the controversy surrounding group home and residential programs. These unlicensed and unaccredited programs operate with untrained staff and unproven treatment techniques. As such, some unlicensed programs have billed Medicaid for staff that were never hired or worked in the group home program (Kelly and Frazier). Referring sources (e.g., Department of Juvenile Justice), mental health professionals, and parents should not have to struggle with trying to determine if a group home program is operating in an ethical and effective manner.

While gaining licensure or accreditation will not guarantee success for each client served, it will provide evidence to referring professionals and parents that the group home programs have to meet state and/or national standards in their respective programs. Currently, many states, along with private and public organizations, are underway working toward accreditation of their mental health practices for youth (Lieberman 2009a). Three top organizations that accredit group homes, along with other mental health programs, are the Joint Commission (JACHO), the Council on Accreditation (COA), and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Effectiveness of Group Home Programs

The debate of the usefulness and effectiveness of group home programs has been an issue for years now. As

with any treatment paradigm, programs must provide evidence that they are effective at treating the issues outlined in their program descriptions. There continues to be a dearth of research concerning the effectiveness of group home and other residential programs. Researchers such as Baker and Calderon (2004) and Scott and Lorenc (2007) suggest that therapeutic group homes can be an effective treatment modality, on the continuum of care, as adolescents move from higher level placements (detention centers) to foster homes or back with their legal guardians. Even the large-scale Odyssey project (Drais-Parrillo 2004) and research conducted by Florsheim et al. (2004) contend that there is a population of adolescents with behaviors and issues that may be too severe for foster homes. Also, placement in a high level, state operated locked facility (detention center or youth correction center) may be a detriment to their overall potential for success due to the high recidivism rates upon release (Mendel 2000), distance from family and high costs involved.

Drais-Parrillo (2004) also suggests that therapeutic group home programs can be as effective as therapeutic foster homes for many adolescents. Current research (Curtis et al. 2001; Drais-Parrillo) reports that the adolescents referred to group home programs are typically older, with more mental health issues and criminal behaviors than those referred to foster care programs. A study conducted by Breland-Noble et al. (2005) showed adolescents, who were classified as “seriously emotionally disturbed” in North Carolina, were referred to group homes rather than a therapeutic foster care were two to three times more likely to receive services from additional organizations such as specialized schooling, juvenile justice, and counseling. This specific study shows that the continuum of care for adolescents with severe behavioral problems includes group homes, in which they receive the adequate treatment needed.

Conclusion

Group home programs have been a part of the treatment continuum for many years. As with any treatment modality, evidence of the effectiveness of group home programs will continue to be an issue. It is also evident from the dearth of research specifically concerning group homes that more research will need to be conducted in this area. The transient nature of many of these families along with the changing landscape of

group home standards has made it difficult to conduct longitudinal research on group home programs. What is clear is that group home programs must make the decision to become licensed and/or nationally accredited in order to help bring consistency of treatment into these programs. With the mandate from insurance companies and referral sources for programs to provide evidence that they are providing effective treatment, group home programs will either take on the challenge and thrive, or be forced to close.

As with any treatment modality, group home programs are not appropriate for every adolescent. It is incumbent for mental health professionals, referring agencies, and parents to take a proactive role in gathering information about each program and making an evidence-based decision on placement. Thus, licensed/accredited group homes can provide quality treatment on the continuum of care and remain a valuable option for many adolescents and their families.

Cross-References

► Foster Care

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Group Identification

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Overview

Adolescents are in the process of moving away from the closed environment of home to a social world where they are among peers and have to begin to make independent choices. Due to lack of experience, they often are uncertain about appropriate or desirable norms of social behavior, how to balance their social and school lives, and which vocational avenues to traverse. In addition, they may feel uncertain about their self-identity in the context of their social world. To negotiate this uncertainty, adolescents often look to peers for direction (Brown et al. 1994). Youth tend to compare themselves with specific groups of peers. One way to define peer groups are as “reputation-based collectives” of adolescents who may or may not have direct contact and interact with each other (Sussman et al. 2007). Such peer groups tend to be stratified based on shared beliefs, interests in clothes and music, and preference for specific activities. Adolescents often give peer groups names that reflect these preferences (e.g., “jocks” signifies a group that is interested in sports participation). Identification with peer groups not only helps adolescents gain autonomy in the larger world but also helps them develop a positive self-concept. Thus, peer groups often have a significant influence on the choices that the adolescents makes regarding fashion, music, social activities and, as health researchers have found, risky behaviors.

Researchers generally use the term “peer group identification” to refer to adolescents’ identification with delineable reputation-based peer groups

(Sussman et al. 2007). Adolescents “place” themselves into peer group types in at least two ways. First, they may actively participate in the peer group, directly interacting and developing friendships with others in the group. Second, they may identify with a peer social type without any direct interaction with other members of the peer group, demonstrating their identification through their lifestyle (e.g., manner of dress, speech, or activities). Regardless of level of direct contact with others in a group, adolescents make corresponding lifestyle choices to represent which “type” of teen they are within the larger teen culture.

Introduction to Peer Group Identification Literature

The peer group identification literature began at least 5 decades ago (Coleman 1961; Sussman et al. 2007). Several studies have found that peer group identification is related to problem-prone behaviors such as substance use and risk-taking (Sussman et al. 2007). Findings across several peer group identification studies also suggest that a social hierarchy exists among adolescent groups with Elites or Athletes at the top, and that this hierarchy is associated with the level of one’s social involvement, social acceptance, and self-esteem.

General Group Types and Characteristics

These studies have found that youth tend to identify with one of five general categories: Elites, Athletes, Deviants, Academics, and Others. *Elites* are high in peer status and social involvement, and somewhat involved in academics. An elite-type group is the leading group at school and comprises members who generally are successful in academic and extracurricular activities, hold a high opinion of themselves, and are high in both other-perceived and self-perceived social competence. In some studies, elites have been found to be relatively likely to smoke and drink alcohol though in most studies they have been relatively unlikely to engage in these problem behaviors. In a few studies, they have been found to be relatively likely to engage in sexual behavior. Some common peer group names for elites include “Populars,” “Preppies,” “Hot-shots,” and “Socials” (Sussman et al. 2007).

Athletes are high in peer status and social involvement but only slightly involved in academics. These

youth tend to be interested or participate in sports and school athletic activities. Athletes have been found to be relatively likely to drink alcohol in some studies but not others. “Jocks” and “Cheerleaders” represent two common peer group names assigned to athletes (Sussman et al. 2007). *Deviants* are in the middle on peer status and social involvement and rebel against school; that is, they demonstrate very low academic involvement. They tend to be relatively low in self-esteem and life satisfaction. In addition, deviants have consistently been found to be the group most likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use marijuana, use hard drugs, engage in sexual behavior, and get involved in violent situations. Some commonly recognized peer group names for deviants include “Stoners,” “Druggies,” “Gangsters,” and “Burnouts” (Sussman et al. 2007).

Academics are high in academic involvement, in the middle on peer status, and relatively low on social involvement. Academics are least likely to engage in various problem behaviors. Academics are often recognized by peer groups labels such as “Brains,” “Eggsheads,” and “Nerds” (Sussman et al. 2007). Finally, *Others* tend to be relatively low in peer status, social involvement, and academic involvement. They may be involved in small school groups (e.g., “card” clubs). Others tend to be high in level of risky behaviors, but not as high as Deviants. Across studies, others have been variously termed as “Normals,” “Regulars,” “Averages,” “Nobodies,” “Outsiders/Loners/Nerds/Outcasts,” and “Floaters” (“float” from one group to another; Sussman et al. 2007).

Numerous studies exhibit moderately high agreement regarding the general categories of peer crowds – the Elites, Athletes, Academics, Deviants, and Others – (Sussman et al. 2007), as well as the lifestyle characteristics that their names depict. The Deviants perhaps are the most distinct and well definable among the groups (Sussman et al. 2007). Self-identification as part of a Deviant group shows the greatest stability over time. Deviants are most likely to engage in problem behaviors. It should be noted, though, that alcohol use and dating (sex) are associated with festive social interactions and popularity among teens and emerging adults, as well as representing a problem behavior. Hence, this may explain why these behaviors are engaged in by Elites or Athletes as well as by Deviants. Conversely, cigarette smoking, marijuana use, other drug use, and violence

participation may represent primarily problem behaviors, involving Deviants.

Variation in the Measurement of Group Identification

Sussman et al. (2007) found four basic ways of assessing adolescents’ group identification (also termed “crowd affiliation”) prevalent in their systematic review of 44 group identification studies: (1) adolescents’ self-report (i.e., group self-identification), (2) investigators’ classifying of adolescents into peer groups based on use of ethnographic methods, (3) peer ratings of adolescents into groups according to the perceived “social types” prevalent at their schools (i.e., social-type rating), and (4) investigators’ classifying of adolescents into peer groups based on their behavioral characteristics (e.g., aggression), social aspiration among peers, and social involvement.

The diverse approaches taken to conceptualize and operationalize peer group identification in the current literature attest to the complexity of this phenomenon. However, as illustrated by Sussman et al. (2007), the convergence of findings related to peer group names and characteristics across a methodologically varying set of studies suggests a general consensus among researchers regarding the nature of the peer group identification construct itself. In fact, according to Campbell and Fiske’s (1959) Multitrait Multimethod Matrix (MTMM) method, one of the best ways to test construct validity is to use multiple methods to examine the same construct and compare the results. The fact that different methods of assessing this construct have resulted in a similar pattern of normatively distinct crowds validates the phenomenon of peer group identification and its potential to affect adolescent behavior (Pokhrel et al. 2009).

Limitations

There are at least three important methodological limitations of the peer group identification literature. One problem is the tendency to define specific groups and then code them into an “Other” general group. Other groups are coded from such specific group names as “regulars/averages,” “floaters,” “loners,” “drama,” and “farmers,” which reveal rather different if not contradictory characteristics. Means to better understand youth that currently are labeled as Others is needed. For example, one may profitably disaggregate its constituents into meaningful and separate types.

A second problem is whether group identification should be measured by the subject or by peers. Self and peer ratings of peer group identification have their own methodological biases. Some adolescents may have unrealistic perceptions about themselves and thus, when self-rating the peer group to which they belong, may not provide accurate responses. One recent study, for instance, indicated that more than half of a diverse sample of high school students identified with a group different from the one with which most peers associated them, often, apparently, for face-saving reasons (Brown et al. 2008). On the other hand, the peer-report method is potentially biased because peer raters may not be familiar with all of the various groups prevalent at school, their norms, and their members. Given discrepancies between self- and peer ratings of crowd affiliation, it is important for more studies such as Brown et al. (2008) to pursue the meaning and consistency of group identifications and assignments to an adolescent's development.

A third problem is that most research has youth place themselves into the one peer group with which they most closely identify. Yet, it is feasible that youth may identify with multiple groups. To the extent that group identification is context dependent, one indeed could identify with multiple groups. In fact, some researchers have found that when presented with the self-report option, adolescents do affiliate with multiple groups (Kipke et al. 1997; Verkooijen et al. 2007). Comparison of assessment techniques are needed to better understanding of the parameters of group identification.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are at least four research directions that should be considered in this arena. First, research is needed to strengthen the generalizability of the construct. Most studies on group identification have been carried out in the United States. It is not clear how this construct operates elsewhere. In Wales and England, Thurlow (2001) found that most names used for the core groups in their samples resembled group names frequently identified in the US literature, such as "Populars," "Brains," and "Hard People"/"Bad People." Since peer group names are often used in media representing adolescent popular culture, and given the mass media's globalized reach, it would not be surprising to find the peer group names used in the United States spreading

to other cultures. Still, much more work in other countries on this construct is needed.

Second, future research should delve more into emerging adult peer group identification. Apart from Ashmore et al. (2002) who looked into adolescent peer group perceptions among undergraduates, and a few studies that looked into runaway/homeless 12- to 23-year-olds (see Sussman et al. 2007), all the other studies were focused on adolescents. Emerging adults in college or elsewhere may exhibit different peer group identification patterns than younger, middle, and high school students. This may be an interesting area of exploration.

Third, use of social network analysis may be important to discriminate between the perceptions youth have of groups or their own group membership versus actual group interactions or networks, which may reflect different phenomena. For example, in a recent study of middle school youth at 16 schools in southern California, social network analysis indicated that the sociometrically rated popular students were relatively likely to smoke (Valente et al. 2005). This result would appear contrary to group identification studies that indicate that Deviant youth, generally not considered popular, are relatively likely to smoke. Clearly, both group identification and social network data should be collected and compared to better discern how it is that group identification operates as a phenomenon. It is possible those youth that are considered popular by Valente et al. (2005) are also those that consider themselves Deviant through a process of self-identification. One cannot confirm this possibility unless both types of measures are used in the same studies.

Finally, group identification work may be applied to address youth health behaviors (Pokhrel et al. 2009). Identity-based media campaigns have been widely used by marketers to promote products to specific groups of people (Leiss et al. 2005; Sivulka 1998). In particular, the tobacco industry has used psychographic data to identify and market tobacco products to certain crowds, such as "Progressives," "Bohemians," "Spoiled Brats," and "Uptown Girls" (e.g., Braun et al. 2008; Cook et al. 2003). Recently, health campaigners have begun to take notice of the potential utility of peer crowd affiliation and identity as a basis on which to tailor health promotions (Basu and Wang 2009; Howgill 1998; Ling et al. 2007). For example, Berger

and Rand (2008) successfully used college students' peer group identification or disaffiliation in a campaign to spark healthier food choices. Undergraduates were less likely to choose junk food options from a menu when they were told that eating junk food was typical of a peer group (crowd) with which they were disaffiliated. Campaign designers can use adolescents' peer group identification to better tailor or target campaigns that resonate with members of at-risk groups. The intervention aspect of adolescent peer group identification is an area that deserves much further consideration, and may ultimately prove fruitful to researchers, health practitioners, and campaign designers.

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Growth Hormone

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A growth hormone is a protein-based poly-peptide of amino acids that stimulates growth, cell reproduction, and regeneration in humans and other animals. Growth hormone (GH) regulates and promotes somatic and particularly skeletal growth, and it influences carbohydrate, fat, and protein metabolism. Much of the developmental research dealing with growth hormone focuses on the results of its deficiencies. Deficiencies of growth hormone, which can occur sporadically or be inherited by family members, result in pituitary dwarfism (hypophysial dwarfism, nanism). Those deficiencies are associated with insufficiency of other hormones and failures of gonadal development and severely diminished thyroid and adrenocortical function. Conversely, excess growth hormone produces

gigantism (excess growth beginning in childhood), acromegaly (physical enlargement, typically during middle age), and glucose intolerance (and the negative effects of such intolerance) (for a review, see Diamanti-Kandarakis et al. 2004; Quik et al. 2010). Important studies also have shown that GH deficiencies commonly associate with reports of a “suboptimal well-being,” including impaired psychological functions (Dattani and Preece 2004). Children with isolated GH deficiencies have been found to have educational deficits, in particular learning disability and attention-deficit disorders (Sartorio et al. 1995). These challenges tend to relate to longer term outcomes. Adults with GH deficiencies have higher rates of unemployment than the general population, are less involved in leisure activities, show low levels of self-esteem, and tendencies toward depression (see Soares et al. 1999).

Clinically, growth hormone is prescribed for children with GH deficiency and a variety of related developmental problems (such as Turner syndrome and poor growth). Artificial growth hormones can be used to increase the height of adolescents, but results are generally limited to a few inches and work best for children younger than nine and two standard deviations below the average height for their age; and the treatments are provided during childhood (Stein et al. 2004). Given their relative effectiveness and potential risks associated with them (such as heart disease), their use has led to considerable controversy (see Salvemini 2004).

For at least a decade, growth hormone also has become an increasingly popular (but expensive) performance-enhancing substance for athletes (see Fan 1994). Athletes consider it to be an efficient substance that increases their muscle mass and strength. It also is thought to reduce injuries and reduce recovery periods between workouts. Importantly, early studies have shown an increasing use among adolescents, coupled with a lack of understanding of potential effects (see Fan 1994).

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Guardian ad Litem

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One of the most important rules in laws regulating minors is that they rarely have independent rights, that their rights are generally controlled by their parents or others entrusted with their charge. There are times, however, when minors' interests may not be well served by those who have been entrusted with their care. These situations can arise in instances in which families are separating and custody is disputed or in instances in which children are involved in the child welfare system because they are alleged to be abused, neglected, or otherwise harmed. It is in these contexts that guardian ad litem typically are appointed to protect the rights of minors involved in legal processes (see Levesque 2002).

Guardian ad litem are adults who represent the legal interests of minors who lack the legal ability to represent themselves. Importantly, some contexts assume the need for representation as so important that they provide that minors have a right to legal

representation, as is done in the juvenile justice system (for a review, see Caeti et al. 1996); but such contexts do not necessarily assume a need for independent legal representation. It is contexts that involve a need for an independent representation (not necessarily an attorney) that involve guardian ad litem. Despite the important recognition that legal proceedings that potentially affect the interests of children may require their independent representation, much variation continues in contexts that grant minors such representation. Illustrative of the need for, and complexities surrounding, the need for independent representation in legal proceedings is the manner that children are represented in the child welfare system.

Congress has created statutory rights that address children's own independent rights in child protective proceedings. Congress initially did so in the *Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act* (CAPTA) (1974). Under this statute, in order to receive federal funds to support their child welfare programs, states must provide every abused or neglected child a guardian ad litem (GAL) in judicial proceedings that would affect the child's interests. In 1996, Congress amended CAPTA to provide that the appointed GAL may be an attorney or a court-appointed special advocate (or both). CAPTA also defined GALs' roles. The statute promulgated that GALs are to obtain, first hand, a clear understanding of the situation and needs of the child and to make recommendations to the court concerning the best interests of the child. Those interests are of considerable significance given that child welfare proceedings can involve such fundamental decisions as whether children should be returned home, their relationships with their parents should be severed, or they should stay with their siblings. Overall, the significance of these legislative developments is that they indicate a move away from the belief that children should play virtually no role in judicial proceedings affecting them.

Despite CAPTA's important recognition of the need to have children's independent interests represented, significant ambiguities and shortcomings remain (see Levesque 2008). CAPTA reflects the dilemmas and conflicts that continue to plague efforts to design effective ways to represent children in legal proceedings affecting them. Indeed, CAPTA's prescriptive language incorporates several ambiguities and inconsistencies. CAPTA does mandate that every child be "represented" in some manner when their cases involve judicial

proceedings. That representation, however, can vary considerably. The initial response to CAPTA was the establishment of the court-appointed special advocate program ("CASA"), involving the appointment of "citizen" or lay volunteers to represent the interests of children. The use of volunteers meant that children had gained a guardian ad litem representative (either a CASA, attorney, or both) who might advocate for their interests or who simply might make recommendations to the court regarding the child's best interests. The federal statute also required that children's representatives receive appropriate training for satisfactorily fulfilling their role's obligations. That representative, however, did not need to have formal legal training. Also left undetermined was whether children would have a voice in determining the appointment of their court-appointed advocate or attorney. To complicate matters, when courts did appoint legal counsel, their roles often remained unclear in terms of their fundamental obligation to either further their client's wishes or act in the child's best interests. Not surprisingly, these ambiguities permitted a variety of ways to address children's needs when states would enact their own laws relating to the representation of children.

States' mandates reveal a wide variety of ways to approach children's legal representation in child welfare proceedings. State statutes either mandate the assignment of an attorney or other representative to represent the child or grant court's discretion to assign representatives. But, no national consensus exists in terms of the nature of the child's representation. Consequently, state statutes reveal a mixture of legal and lay representation, with states permitting children's attorneys to act as guardians ad litem or as counsel to children (with or without the assistance of a CASA volunteer) or with states simply blending the two potentially inconsistent roles. Statutes also reveal a failure to develop a consistent approach to addressing children's own interests; variations exist in terms of whether those who speak for children advocate for the child's wishes or for the representative's own views of what would be in the child's best interest.

One of the most important areas where inconsistencies remain is in rules regarding the extent to which states grant children "party" status. Some states statutorily grant the child party status, but the more prevalent approach simply avoids the issue by statutorily providing specific party rights to the child, while

refraining from explicitly conferring party status itself. The outcome of this approach means that most, but not all, jurisdictions view the child as a “virtual” or *de facto* party with many, if not all, the rights of an “actual” party. The focus on the term “party” permits courts and legislatures to confer many party rights on a piecemeal basis and grant children less than full party rights. The “party” status is of significance because it permits variation. Thus, several states have enacted statutes granting children the right to choose their counsel while, in other states, the child may request (note the focus on “may,” which means that they need not get) the appointment of independent counsel, while in others the court may assign counsel when the child and guardian ad litem disagree.

An arguably even more key area of ambiguity involves the fundamental matter of whether representatives should advocate the child’s “best interests” or the “child’s wishes.” Recall that CAPTA requires states to appoint a guardian ad litem or an individual who fulfills the guardian ad litem role, language which strongly promoted the “best interests” aspect of child representation. State legislators have continued to embrace this concept. Although the majority of states follow this rule, state statutes are not always consistent. Some states stipulate that an attorney shall not consider or be bound by the child’s wishes; others provide that counsel may consider the child’s wishes when determining the child’s “best interests”; others require the attorney to apprise the court of the “child’s wishes”; and others simply remain silent regarding the extent representatives are to respect children’s wishes. No simple rule seems to address the place of children’s wishes in decisions affecting them.

The lack of specificity in rules guiding the representation of children’s interests also finds reflection in another key aspect of the use of guardian ad litem: the extent to which courts are to consider the evidence provided by them. Importantly, whether the factors to be considered in determining the best interests of the child are provided by statute or determined by the judge, courts make decisions on an individual case-by-case basis, and statutes do not establish the weight to be accorded to any particular factor. This discretion becomes rather consequential considering that a court typically retains the power to decide whether to appoint counsel for children, and probably who that counsel might be. The power of this discretion becomes

even more obvious considering the lack of consensus about what representatives should present courts.

This area of law reflects important developments. Minors increasingly have rights to having their interests presented in legal proceedings that could profoundly affect them. A close look at legal mandates, however, reveals important variations and considerable limitations. Thus, although the law now is marked with the important recognition that minors should have independent voices in legal proceedings, it remains unclear what constitutes those rights and the extent to which their voices will be heard and given weight.

Cross-References

► [Guardianship](#)

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Guardianship

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Guardianship refers to the relationship that a legally responsible individual has for the care and management of the person or property of either a minor or someone who is not competent to manage part (or, in some instances, all) of their affairs. Given the wide variety of circumstances in which guardianships can be created, it is not surprising that guardianships can take many forms (see, e.g., Mosanyi 2002; Frolik 2002). Guardianship can be temporary, where the guardian retains power for only a limited time, or it can be standby, which means that it comes into effect only after a particular event comes to fruition. It also can be limited, meaning that it serves a specific function, or it can be

plenary, which would involve controlling nearly all of an individual's rights. Importantly, conservatorships are narrow forms of guardianships in that they deal only with a ward's property while guardianship also includes personal decisions as well as, for example, medical care. Notably, involuntary guardianships can be used, and those would involve a court's making a decision in the absence of a ward's consent (or absent the consent of someone who already served as guardian over the person); or it could be voluntary, where the individual (or other guardian responsible for them) would consent and be able to consent to the need for the guardian to manage their affairs. Guardianship now constitutes a potentially complex area of law regulating the care of individuals and what they would otherwise have within their control.

Although guardianships can take many forms, when it comes to minors, the general rule is that parents are their natural guardians who are responsible for their education, health, support, custody, and overall care. Parents' guardianship rights are exclusive. As a result, parental rights tend to be plenary, with some notable exceptions when adolescents have reached levels of maturity or there are other reasons to limit the rights of parents so that their children can exercise their own independent rights without interference from parents. When parents are unavailable, another adult can be appointed as guardian. Guardians of minors can perform a variety of duties depending on the nature of the guardianship. If the guardianship is for an estate, for example, then it is to be limited to that. If the guardianship is deemed a personal guardianship, then the guardian essentially can perform and be responsible for the duties that parents would have regarding, for example, their children's health, education, custody, and general care.

Guardianship law derives from Roman law with its major concern centered on the protection of a minor's property, and that concern still finds reflection in guardianship laws. However, guardianship laws involving

minors have changed dramatically over the past two decades (see Mosanyi 2002). Several social issues contributed to the recognition of the need for new forms of guardianships. Among other important issues were the AIDS epidemic (which left children without parents), the increase in the use of foster care systems (which involved minority youth disproportionately and led to discussions about subsidizing their guardianship), the increase of single parenthood (with only one parent being the natural guardian of children), and the needs of other groups such as the elderly and disabled. These are important developments in that, traditionally, parents could control guardianship only through their wills (at their death) or by petition. Those traditional means of awarding guardianship still remain, but states now provide for much greater variety in the situations that they will recognize and protect so that parents and their children can feel comfortable that their decisions will be followed.

Guardianships have become important legal mechanisms that parents can use to direct their children's upbringing when the parents are unable to do so. They can be a means of appointing legal representatives for children and can serve as important alternatives to placing children for adoption or as a temporary means of caring for children when parents are unable to do so. In this manner, guardianships may be viable options for families in that they may not require the termination of parental rights and they permit families to remove potentially intrusive state agencies from their lives.

Cross-References

► [Guardian ad Litem](#)

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